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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



WITH A GESTURE OF UTMOST LOATHING, DICK FLUNG HAUKE DOWN UPON THE GROUND.

THE GIRL HE LEFT BEHIND HIM.

[A NOVELETTE.]

PROLOGUE.

MISS CAWUTT, wearing her most severe aspect, had marshalled the first-class girls before her, whilst all the other scholars looked on half-afraid, half-delighted, that anything should occur to break the dull routine of school life. In her hand the principal held a note folded in the form of a billet-doux, and upon this note all eyes were rivetted.

"It is with surprise and grief, I find that one of my girls is carrying on a foolish and clandestine correspondence with someone who signs himself 'Dick.' I ask that girl to save herself from severe punishment, and me from a very painful duty by openly acknowledging her guilt. If she refuses to do this I shall not rest until I have sifted the matter to the bottom, and then she will learn how much harder her punishment is,

because of her concealment. Girls, to whom is this addressed!"

One or two crimsoned because they were innocent, and feared to be thought guilty; some one in the rear sniggered, but for a moment there was no answer, then a rather tall girl of sixteen stepped forward. She had nut brown hair and eyes, was extremely pretty, and self-possessed.

"If you please, Miss Cawcutt, I think the note is intended for me."

"For you!" exclaimed the principal with a startled and grieved expression. "You, Marion Elsmere! and I thought you my most exemplary pupil. I need hardly say how you have disappointed me—"

"Will you hear me, please," said Marion, "indeed, I am not in fault."

"If you can excuse your deceit and folly do so now."

"I really could not help myself," Marion began, with the mischievous dimples beginning to show in her cheeks. "I have had about a dozen of such notes. I knew they were meant for me, because every time they were thrown over the wall they fell at my feet, and I was usually walking alone, just under the chestnuts."

"And by whom were they thrown?"

"I cannot say certainly. I only saw the young gentleman on one of the occasions, and then we did not speak. I assure you, madam, I have never replied to any letter, and indeed I treated them as nonsense."

"But you were very culpable not to complain to me," severely; "why did you not?"

The large brown eyes met hers fully.

"Well, for one thing I was afraid you would think me to blame; and then," here the pretty head dropped, and a shamed flush stole over her cheeks and neck—"then, it seemed good fun to have a lover of my own—all the girls envied me."

Miss Cawcutt was aghast.

"I am sorry that when your mind should be wholly occupied by your studies, and the ambition to excel alike in goodness and knowledge, it prefers to dwell upon frivolity. I shall not, however, treat you with undue harshness—that you have not replied to this insolent creature is something in your favour; but you have been guilty of concealment—and I cannot let that pass. Consequently, Miss Elsmere, you will not take the usual walk this afternoon with your



companions, but will remain in your room; after ten I expect you to present me with a translation from Heinrich Heine—the passage which contains his confession of faith. You may now go to your room."

With a slight bow Marion obeyed, although the indignant colour burned in her brown cheeks.

"How dare she make the fault mine; and oh, what a fuss about a trifle! It is downright spiteful of her to give me a German exercise—she knows I never can succeed with the beastly language—I hate it! and I hate the land, I hate the people from Kaiser to scavenger," saying which the young lady threw the volume she carried upon the floor and dealt it a savage little kick. Then she sat down and looked frowningly out of her window which was surrounded by June roses and honeysuckle.

Marion was a parlour boarder, and Mr. Elsmere, her uncle, and guardian during her parents' absence in India, had especially stipulated (much to the girl's disgust) that she should have a bedroom entirely to herself.

She was not inclined to study, and just then felt herself a very injured person, indeed.

"I have never so much as spoken to Dick," she said aloud; "but I am half-inclined to do so if ever the opportunity occurs—and gracious, won't I scold him for getting me into such a mess. I wonder who he is and why he is so fond of me? I've often thought lately Miss Cawcutt would notice him at the cathedral—he does stare so horribly at me."

She heard the dinner bell ring, and tried to persuade herself she was not hungry, but at sixteen Marion Elsmere had a healthy appetite, and although it was "Yokel's Feast," as the girls irreverently called Wednesday dinner, she would not have disdained to dine off pickled pork, cabbage and potatoes, followed by meat pudding with jam—a maximum of the first with a minimum of the last. Instead of this a maid brought up a tray containing a plate of thick, stale bread and a glass of water.

"Oh, take it away," said Marion, rebelliously, "I won't eat that."

"I knew you wouldn't, miss," returned the maid with an amicable smile, "so cook and me put our heads together, and thought you might like some hard-boiled eggs. They don't leave any smell about if the missus happens to come up, and they're all ready for eating," saying which she drew from her capacious pocket two eggs neatly wrapped in note paper.

"Jessie," said Marion, with profound gratitude, "you are an angel, and if you keep walking in the way you are now going, you shall have a fine-looking sweetheart, whom you shall marry, and with whom you shall live happy ever after."

"Miss Elsmere, you'll always have your joke, but I daren't stay to listen; Miss Cawcutt she'll be coming after me like lightning."

So Marion ate her frugal dinner alone, attacking it with a zest which spoke volumes for her appetite, and her freedom from love vagaries.

Then she had the pleasure (!) of seeing the girls depart for the long afternoon spin under the care of Miss Cawcutt and Mademoiselle Dupont.

It was warm and she was lazy. Heinrich Heine and his confession lay unheeded, as she rested her arms on the window-sill and looked out.

Her room was nearest to the wall which bordered the chaste grounds of Westminster Seminary; beyond there was only a dreary lane, which admitted tradesmen to back entrances, and the chief complaint of Miss Cawcutt's girls was that they could not see a single passer by, so high was the wall which bounded their territory.

As Marion leaned there, she became suddenly aware of a rustling in the leaves of the nearest chestnut—which grew beyond the wall—and turning idly saw first, a curly yellow head, ornamented with a blue cap, a frank, handsome face lit up by bright grey eyes, and a crimson flush overspread her brow and cheeks—for this was Dick.

"You had better go away," she said, with all the severity of sixteen years. "You haven't any right to climb our trees, or to—send me notes, you know."

He laughed, and laughing was more comely than ever; never was there a nicer, handsomer lad than Dick Harland at eighteen.

"This isn't your tree," he rejoined, seating himself on a branch which was in close proximity to her window, "it's common property. And oh, I say, why don't you ever reply to my notes? I wait here hours watching for you and then you never throw me a word or a look."

"No," answered the girl, still in her severest mood, "because I consider you rude."

"Really? Oh, I can't believe that, because, you see, I never had a thought of insulting you. But I'm always seeing you at the cathedral—I go on purpose—and it does seem foolish not to speak when—when—oh, you know what I mean!"

"I know what you say in your stupid notes, but that is all nonsense, and I cannot help laughing over them;" then as his face changed and he looked quite depressed, she went on—"Of course they are beautiful letters, but I am afraid I am not quite old enough to understand them—and—and you are only a boy are you, Dick? Excuse me calling you Dick; it is the only name by which I know you."

"I am eighteen," he answered, with his manliest air, "and thank you for calling me Dick. If you would tell me your own name I should be so glad!"

"I will tell you part; I am Marion. Now if you please, go away."

"Oh, not yet; the old cat and the kittens are out. I saw them go. Why are you staying in all alone?"

"Because of you. Miss Cawcutt found your last dreadful nonsense, and questioned us all about it. Of course, I couldn't let any other girl bear the blame, so I was sent to prison. I hate solitary confinement."

"What an old beast! And are you very angry with me, Marion?"

"Not so angry as I was, because you have come to shorten the afternoon; but you will be careful that Miss Cawcutt does not see you. And Dick, where do you live?"

"With the dean: it's beastly slow; but I am leaving in a fortnight, and in October I am afraid I go up to Cambridge. I wonder if you will miss me!"

"Not at all," answered Miss Elsmere, loftily, "when you are gone I may hope for a little rest from surveillance; I'm a suspected party. What are you going to be, Dick?"

"A soldier, I hope—I mean to fail at everything else, then my people must let me have my own way. Marion, do you ever think how much I love you?"

"That is such nonsense; and if you please you will go away before Miss Cawcutt returns. I have a German lesson to translate—all through you—and—and I believe she would expel me if she saw me talking with you. Go!"

"All right, I am off at once," dejectedly, and the yellow curls under the blue cap disappeared a moment.

Marion felt hurt, but she laughed a little when Dick's face appeared once more among the leaves.

"You didn't quite mean what you said," he began, pleadingly. "You don't look cruel, and upon my soul, Marion, I love you awfully. Won't you try if you can't like me a little too?"

She fenced him with—

"I don't see how you can know if you love me or not. You have never spoken to me until now, and Miss Cawcutt says that girls of my age should not think of such things."

"I don't guess Miss Cawcutt ever had a sweetheart; she was born an old maid; but I can tell you of ever so many girls who were married before they were as old as you, and they seemed to know their own minds."

"Good-bye," said Marion, retreating behind her curtains and remaining there until Dick's persistent murmuring of "Marion! Marion!" brought her a little angrily to the front.

"Why don't you go away? I've told you I hate you, and that I shall be dreadfully scolded."

"I'm going away for good in a few days; you might be kind to a fellow."

"I hope you will be happy," she remarked,

demurely, "and good." then once more she disappeared laughing a little at her boy-lover's dismay.

"Marion, just a moment, I have something to say; something to ask."

"Well," suppressing her laughter, "say on! You remind me of Romeo. Oh, what a donkey he was, and Juliet was so horribly forward."

"Juliet only knew how to speak of what was in her heart. She was adorable! When I am gone, may I write you? Marion, dear, say yes!"

"No, no, no! I wonder you presume so far. Oh, do go away, think of my danger."

"I'm going, but—oh, can't you say you like me a little, when I love you so much! When I am of age I shall come back again for you."

"And I shall be gone," laughed the young voice from behind the curtains.

"Then tell me where to find you. Give me your full name and address; I am willing to return the compliment. And oh! above all give me some little thing which I may prize for your sake."

In a spirit of mischief she threw him a rose, which he eagerly caught, then as she heard the hall bell ring, she cried—

"Go! go! they are returning!" and not wishing further to hurt his Dulcinea, Master Richard Harland dropped to the ground.

CHAPTER I.

"MARION, Marion, pray hurry; you know how much Eustace dislikes to wait; you are fifteen minutes behind already."

Marion turned her beautiful smiling face upon the speaker, "Now, auntie, if you did not so humour that big son of yours he would be a great deal easier to manage. I shall be ready in five minutes."

"But Eustace never accepts excuses; he is such a stickler for punctuality," urged Mrs. Elsmere, "and if you wish to live happily you must remember that when once you are his wife, or there will be endless bothers."

"We are not married yet," the girl returned, drawing on her gloves, "nor even formally betrothed. I have a fancy, auntie, that I would rather choose my husband myself."

"You would certainly make a mess of it, and I hope you won't air such ideas before Eustace, he is so particular with regard to his women-folk. And then you know, Marion, that your father approves the alliance."

Marion's eyes flashed. "Of course, because it will rid him of a daughter who makes him look ridiculous. Just fancy, the new Mrs. Elsmere is just twenty—my senior by a year—it would not, perhaps, suit her to play stepmother and chaperon to me."

"I am sure your father is very generous, and the provision he would make for you is in every way desirable—but oh! are you ready?"

"Presently; go down and entertain Eustace till I come," and she proceeded to finish her toilet in a very leisurely fashion.

She had grown into a very beautiful girl, and in this her first season held quite a little court of admirers; but it was whispered that none but her cousin Eustace Elsmere might aspire to her hand, and more than one young fellow called this "a beastly shame." As for Marion she had grown accustomed to the idea, and had not at any time rebelled against it. Of love and its vagaries she was blissfully ignorant; she had known Eustace all her life, and although he was eleven years her senior, and a trifle dogmatic, she did not think that she should be altogether unhappy as his wife.

"And, of course," she said, sapiently, as she threw on her cloak, "if ever we are married he must be content to take me as I am—with all my faults and my few virtues."

"Poor, dear, prudish old Eustace, how I glory in shocking his sense of propriety."

She went down then, to find her aunt and cousin waiting her in the hall (Mr. Elsmere was now a cypher in the house, being a confirmed invalid).

"You are late as usual," said Eustace in measured tones.

"Late! that of course," laughed Marion, "it is a woman's privilege; and I hate to be the first to enter a ball-room; are these my flowers? Thanks, they look nice," and she tripped down the steps before him. He was not ill-looking, indeed, but for his colourless skin and the paleness of his cold blue eyes, he would have been accounted handsome. But it was a curious fact that no man was ever enthusiastic in his praise, and that out of a crowd of acquaintances he had not a single friend. As they drove along he delivered a little lecture upon punctuality in all things, to which Marion listened with closed eyes and half smiling lips.

"This is the first principle of business," he continued, when she broke in

"Well, I am neither a saleswoman nor a clerk, and I hate to feel I must do this, or be there at a certain time. I had a surfeit of that sort of thing at Westminster. Oh, how I loathed the regular hours for rising, dining, walking, going to bed. I used to say then that if ever I were my own mistress I would get up at midnight if I chose, dine at six a.m., and breakfast at 10 p.m. If I chose to lie in bed all day I would, and in fact I would make my little world topsy-turvy."

"You are talking like a child, Marion, and it is fortunate that you will have a husband who can control your vagaries, and regulate your conduct."

"Oh, excellent young man!" * * *

"How much elder art thou than thy looks!" mocked Marion as she sprang from the carriage; "really, Eustace, you must not count either upon my obedience or my aptitude for learning," and still with a smile upon her lips she entered the hall. She was at once pounced upon by Minnie Grimshaw, the youngest daughter of the house.

"Marion, I had almost given you up! I thought perhaps old Gruff and Grim had forbidden you to come; some lovers are so exigent."

"I don't think you are very polite," answered Marion, laughing, "but I'll excuse your rudeness if you promise not to transgress again; and to remember that Eustace and I are not *really* engaged—perhaps never shall be. I am not sufficiently perfect to satisfy my very estimable cousin."

Minnie laughed.

"If you marry him, I shall have to cut you or be cut by you; Gruff and Grim is far too serious a body to tolerate frivolous little me. Oh! I must tell you—we have the dearest fellow here to-night! He stands just about six feet two in stockings—if he wears them—and he is a soldier. I adore soldiers—don't you, Maid Marion?"

"I don't know; I haven't had the good or bad fortune to know Tommy Atkins as he is," laughed Miss Elsmere. "Pray what is the idol's name?"

"Harland—just it nice! he is only a cadet yet, but he is better than many a full-blown captain, and half the girls are wild about him." Conversation was at this moment rendered impossible, and all together the party entered the ball-room, where Marion was quickly surrounded by men craving this or that dance. Eustace had written his name opposite three sets of quadrilles—he voted the polka ancient, the waltz vulgar, and the mazurka bad form. Marion standing by her aunt, who was talking volubly to an old crony, suddenly heard a voice whisper her name. Startled, she turned, to find herself confronted by a big fair fellow, with close cropped yellow hair, bright gray eyes, and a small yellow moustache.

"Dick!" she said involuntarily, as her face flushed.

She had almost forgotten all about her school-boy lover, but now everything connected with him, and the part he had played in her life, curiously enough rose to the surface of her mind, as though it had happened but yesterday.

Her recognition pleased him, and he put out a large strong hand to half crush hers in its grasp, saying—

"So you have remembered me! that is jolly."

Mrs. Elsmere was regarding them curiously, so in a whisper Marion said—

"It is my aunt, she will expect me to introduce you; and—and I don't even know your name."

"It is Harland," answered Dick with the smile

which, although seen but once, she remembered. "I'm quite respectable, although I look a bit of a Goth, and I'm cadet in the sixty-fourth. Get the introduction over, and let me look at your card. You haven't given all away!"

"Oh, no."

And then, with greatest composure, she introduced Mr. Harland, whom she had met at Miss Cawcutt's, a fact which impressed Mrs. Elsmere with Dick's respectability, so that neither by sign nor look did she evince any displeasure when he secured two dances, a waltz and a varsoviana.

"So," said Marion, as Dick claimed his first turn, "you are the favourite!"

Dick laughed.

"Oh, I say, don't make fun of me! The Grimshaws, and a few other people are awfully nice to me, but that is because they are kindly disposed, and know I am going out in September, so they make a fuss. Marion, you are jollier than ever, 'pon my honour!"

"Mr. Harland, my surname is Elsmere; can you remember it?"

"I'll try, if you wish it; but I've thought of you as Marion for three full years, so if I make a slip you'll have to forgive me. Do you remember the rose you gave me? I've got it yet—fact! It's withered now, but it smells sweet still. I wonder—a little wistfully—"if you you have ever thought of your gift a second time."

"Why, no," laughing; "that is, not until you recalled it to my mind. You know I gave it you just to be rid of you. I was in such a fright lest Miss Cawcutt should return and discover you, that I was ready to give or promise anything."

"What a pity I did not know that," quoth Dick, his handsome eyes looking fully into hers; "I might have asked something less tangible and yet of greater value. I would not have had so very far to climb for a kiss."

"Your reward might have been a box on the ears. This is our dance!"

Dick danced splendidly, "not like a stick," as Marion was wont to declare Eustace did. And when the waltz was ended he took his companion into the quaint old-fashioned garden, a rarity now in London.

"So you did not go to Cambridge?" said Marion with an upward look.

"No, you remembered that! I went to Sandhurst instead. My governor is the best of governors, and agreed to let me go, although we aren't rich folk by any means. Fact is, I have hardly anything beyond my pay. But I like the life; it is jollier than I thought, and I'm proud of my profession. Marion—I mean Miss Elsmere, is that big, light-coloured fellow, your brother?"

"No, my cousin. I live with his people. My father has been so long in India that I hardly remember him. Mother died just after you left Westminster, and then, almost before letters of condolence could reach father, he married again. A case of funeral meats furnishing the wedding feast, and my new mother is exactly twelve months my senior. I wanted to go out when mamma died, but father would not hear of it, although he was then inconsolable at mother's loss. How soon men can forget!"

"You are not fair," said Dick, warmly. "There are men and men; and I know a widow who married exactly three months after her husband's decease, although she wept whole pools of tears until the new suitor came along."

"I hope he made her very miserable," remarked Marion.

"I can't satisfy your curiosity with regard to that; but you should not judge a whole class by one man. Look how I have remembered you; and it is three years since we met—exactly three; and if I live to be a hundred I'll never forget how you looked that first day I saw you at the cathedral. Of course you weren't dressed in such swagger style but you couldn't possibly have looked nicer. Rowley, another fellow at the dean's, and I nearly fought over you."

"I think," said Marion, coolly, although her cheeks were crimson, "we will taboo all reminiscences, and I must be going back to my aunt."

"And the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance? Oh, don't be in a hurry."

"I am nothing if not punctual," said Marion, mendaciously; "and Eustace relies on me for the quadrille. I hate set dances."

"I'm jolly glad you do; people look such idiots bowing and scraping to each other. But don't forget the varsoviana. Thank Heaven I shall take you down to supper, and get another chance of quiet talk."

Then he led her back to Mrs. Elsmere, and it was distinctly noticeable that the girl's brilliant beauty had additional lustre; excitement had deepened the colour upon her cheeks, and darkened her dark eyes.

"She is positively lovely!" said Mrs. Grimshaw to Mrs. Elsmere. "Eustace should be proud of his bride-elect."

"I suppose he is," answered the lady; "but he will have much to endure if he marries dear Marion; she is full of vagaries, and he—"

"Is an awful prig," thought Mrs. Grimshaw as she turned to address a very late arrival. "I hope Marion will never be foolish enough to accept him."

It would be long before Miss Elsmere would forget that ball; she was heard, after the varsoviana, to declare that Dick danced like an angel. And over the informal supper they grew so friendly that Marion gave him permission to call at Prince's Gate the following day.

"I shall be awfully late," he said, with a contradictory smile, "and, of course, you will be out; but, anyhow, I shall have satisfied my very importunate conscience."

CHAPTER II.

Was there ever a bonnier lad than Dick Harland, with his frank bearing, his honest, handsome face? Or did ever so hearty a laugh wake sleeping echoes, or testify to the wholesome, happy nature of its owner?

With no thought of danger Marion extended the hand of friendship to him, never pausing to ask how it would all end; they were constantly together, until some of Mrs. Elsmere's friends remarked upon the fact, and hinted it was hardly a wise arrangement.

That lady spoke to her son on the subject, but he simply smiled in his lordliest way, for it never occurred to him that any reasonable girl could prefer any suitor to himself.

Still, he liked to assert his authority over Marion, so he took her gravely to task, begging her to be less impressive in her manner towards that "lubberly dragon."

She listened to him with her head a little drooped, and her small hands idly folded in her lap; the colour on her cheeks had deepened, and her mouth was mutinous; Eustace foresaw rebellion and prepared for it.

"I think you hardly know what you imply," she said angrily, whilst her eyes flashed defiance at him. "I trust that I have in no way outraged the proprieties; I believed lack of breeding did not count in my list of sins."

"You are taking an absurd and childish view of the matter altogether Marion. If you stay to think, you will readily understand that as my fiancée you have no right to show any man marked favour."

"Stop," she cried, "you have no right to proclaim me your fiancée. It is true the matter has been discussed—without my voice being heard—it is also true that my father has consented to our marriage—without ascertaining my wishes—but that does not give you the privilege to address me in such a fashion. Tell me, Eustace, why do you want to marry me?"

"My dear girl, I am by no means anxious to hasten the ceremony; but a man in my position owes it to himself, and society, to marry. It is also necessary my wife should be in all things my equal. You have birth and breeding; even if you inherit only your mother's fortune, you will be well-dowered; you have beauty—I hate an ugly woman—and as a rule you are not ill-tempered."

"I never knew myself until now," cried Marion, with rather a bitter laugh. "I don't sound a bad lot, Mr. Auctioneer—pray continue your laudation."

"I have ended my praises," Eustace said, frigidly; "now for the reverse side of the picture. You are at all times a thought too unconventional, your manner lacks the repose I desire to see; I intend to give you some lessons on these subjects, which, trifling as they appear, yet make or mar the woman."

"Useful information for the young!" said Marion, leaning back in her chair. "Eustace, you are awfully kind, but I must decline your services. I shall never attain to the repose, of 'the Vere De Vere,' and I would not if I could. I'm not by any means a 'prunes and prism' sort of girl, and I think that we should not agree very well. You are (pardon the word) a trifle phlegmatic—whilst I am the reverse; and as Byron says, although you men admire 'eyes of blue, or lips carnation,' these are not sufficient to fix your roving love; that—"

"The secret chain
Which binds us in your humble train
To hail you queen of all creation,
Know, in a word, 'tis animation."

"If you have finished, Marion, I will take up my parable; first remarking that I altogether object to the class of literature you favour. Byron, I consider unfit for girls to read."

"Oh, now you are talking goody-goody trash. Why, if you object to my innocent books, do you read those horrid French novels which you keep under lock and key lest I should see them and be corrupted."

"You forget, Marion, that what is perfectly proper for men would be the reverse for women; you would not understand the moral conveyed in one of those volumes you condemn. My dear girl, pray be reasonable; I am your natural guide, your future conduct will reflect either shame or honour upon me—once my wife."

Marion started to her feet.

"I think I shall never be that; you take too much for granted; and I will never marry a man who considers it below his dignity to woo me, but jumps to the conclusion I am won. I have a better opinion, a higher valuation of myself than that," and with her head well erect, she hastily left the room, Eustace staring after her in astonishment.

Then he sighed like one sore afflicted.

"She will require an immensity of training! Her temper is simply unreliable, her opinions dreadfully pronounced; but that little bit of her mother's property will dovetail neatly into the Home estate, and I don't despair of the success of my method, when she is my wife."

Marion did not see him again that day, for which she was devoutly thankful; there had been a time, not long ago, when she had regarded marriage with her cousin as the natural close of her story; but now she thought of it with nothing short of abhorrence, and determined to write her father begging him to withdraw his approval, and stating her own ideas on the subject.

She was restless and discontented, why, she could hardly tell, and when the Grimshaws called to take her to the Naval Exhibition, she was half-inclined to break her promise.

But this, Minnie would not allow, and throughout the drive to Earl's Court, did her best to revive her friend's drooping spirits.

Still it was a heavy-eyed, very sober Marion who entered the grounds, and nothing seemed to interest her very much; until a voice said,—

"I had a sort of instinct I should find you here, Mrs. Grimshaw. I am the luckiest fellow under the sun to drop across you so soon," and there was the big dragoon smiling down upon them, and looking so radiantly happy that the colour flamed high in Marion's face.

The Grimshaws declared themselves delighted at the meeting, and Minnie, who was Dick's *confidante* and friend, contrived that he should take possession of Marion.

"Of course," she said, "you will go through the Victory!"

But Dick answered quickly,—

"Not unless you really wish it; I have done it twice, and Miss Elanere has seen all there is to be seen—will you let us wait about here?"

"No need to do that," answered Mrs. Grimshaw. "We are going through with the Passingshams, and shall be sure to meet you in the

grounds later on. I give Miss Elanere to your keeping," and, as they turned away she added, *sotto voce*,—

"Although Eustace would not thank me for my good offices, Minnie, if I can help it, Marion shall never throw herself away on that cold-hearted, unmitigated prig."

"I am with you in that, mother; I mean her to marry dear old Dick Harland."

For a short time Dick and his companion walked on in silence, he intent upon reading her face, and presently he said,—

"Marion, what is wrong?"

"Wrong! Oh, nothing! How fanciful you are, Mr. Harland."

"I never had that character before," said Dick, coolly, "and I don't deserve it now. Do you think I don't know every change of your face—every change in your voice, and to-day both are sad, and a wee bit vexed. Tell me what has happened since we met?"

"Oh, nothing very particular, only I have been dreadfully scolded, and I hate unpleasantness of any kind—and—oh don't ask me further."

"That is just what I intend doing," remarked Dick, with an air of mastery which, whilst it delighted, more than half frightened the girl. "Has the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance been lecturing you on your short-comings? Ah, you need not answer—your face is such a tell-tale one—you could not possibly deceive me. I wish I had him here to punch his head. How did you offend?"

"Oh, please don't ask me—at least not here—not now; but I feel so wretched and so lonely, I never meant to tell you, Dick—I mean Mr. Harland—"

"Oh, do stop at Dick; it is so much more friendly and so easy to say. Marion, isn't your aunt kind to you!—tell me truly, dear—"

She trembled under his look and the caress in his voice.

"She does her duty by me, but we are quite antagonistic in all respects. Then poor uncle is really not accountable for his words and actions now, and so Eustace rules us all. I should not mind so much if I felt father held a warm corner in his heart for me, but I suppose he does not even remember the colour of my hair and eyes. It is more than fourteen years since he saw me, and a man's memory can't be trusted to serve him faithfully so long as that, and father is evidently good at forgetting—"

"His second marriage rankles in your minds; do try to reconcile yourself to it."

"I cannot; it was so horribly, so indecently soon; the grass had certainly not had time to make mother's grave beautiful, before he took another wife—not two months—and he had loved her—think of it, Dick—"

"A beast that wants discourse of reason,
Would have mourn'd longer."

And what sort of woman do you think is this Katie who was in such haste to wear a dead wife's honours! Doesn't it make one distrustful of vows?"

"No," said Dick, stoutly, "because luckily all men and all women are not alike. If I were never to see you any more I should still hold your memory dear, even though you pretend to laugh at me, and have such a very poor opinion of me. I wish to Heaven I were not going out now, although I was so anxious for the change before I met you again. But, Marion, we need not lose sight of each other any more—and—oh, I hardly dare ask it, but if you would promise to think of me as I wish and pray you may—"

"Hush," she answered swiftly, "the Grimshaws and Passingshams are upon us, and you must not talk nonsense—I—I cannot listen to you now."

"When will you! Oh, you darling! I would take you in my arms before them if only—"

"What an awful crush!" cried Minnie, pouncing upon them, much to Dick's disgust and Marion's relief. "We hardly knew how to get through the Victory, and the idiotic officials were all the time saying 'Move on, please, as if that were possible—and oh, Marion, how dreadfully realistic the 'Death of Nelson' is; it gave me such a start. I was glad to get once more into the sunshine."

There was hardly any chance after that for confidential speech, and Marion was half sorry, half glad; she knew now that Dick honestly loved her—of her feelings toward him she was not quite so sure as yet—and she had tried vainly to tell him of that tacit agreement between herself and Eustace.

Why should she care if he knew! Indeed, did not everyone, himself excepted, take it for granted that their marriage was really only a question of time.

But Dick would be sorry and perhaps count her deceitful. Dear old Dick, whose opinion and affection she regarded so highly.

But of course he would forget; he was a man, and he would soon be thousands of miles distant from her. And when she thought of that she felt so lonely and wretched that she began to cry, and cried until her pillows were wet, and her white lids swollen.

She took herself to task severely for her folly, but she could not stay her tears, and in fear and trembling she thought,—

"Do I love him that his going makes so weak a fool of me! Oh, Dick! Dick! my Dick!"

CHAPTER III.

MARION did not see Dick again before they left town for the Home Estate, which was situated in Somersetshire. Mrs. Elanere had become alarmed, and so carried her niece off at the earliest opportunity; being wise enough, however, to give no other reason for this movement than that she was weary of London, and longed for a breath of country air.

Eustace did not go down with them; for all his prim manner and "moral-philosophy-sort-of-bearing" he was something of a Sybarite, and town held many charms for him yet.

In her enforced solitude (for none of the county families had returned) Marion had ample opportunity for thought; and as she brooded over her future she came gradually to the knowledge of her heart's dear love, and it was not Eustace who could claim it; but Dick, bonnie, almost penniless, Dick Harland.

And then, because she was so leal and true of heart, to herself she made a little vow,—

"By Heaven's help I will marry the man I love, and none save he!"

That resolution made, she was less restless and troubled, hoping with youth's buoyancy that all would yet be well for her. And had not Dick promised quickly to join her!

It was at the close of a sultry July day that she stood at the gate bounding the kitchen garden and meadow, looking wistfully down the dusty road, and wishing that all was settled for her, when she heard quick ringing steps, and her heart ceased beating just a moment, only to throb with awful violence the next, as glancing in the opposite direction she saw Dick coming towards her—white of face, stern of eye.

He did not utter a word of greeting; but when she stretched out welcoming hands he caught and held them fast whilst he glared into her eyes and she began to tremble. Then all suddenly, as her face grew piteous, he asked, hoarsely,—

"Is it true! Marion, my girl, could you so deceive me! Tell me, for Heaven's sake, is it true?"

"Is what true?" she whispered back. "Oh, Dick, you frighten me!"

"Was I too rough and hasty!" he asked with instant penitence. "Poor little girl! But, oh! if you guessed the agony I have endured since last night you would not be so very angry with me. I was dining with some fellows, and your cousin was present. When we were all fairly merry they began proposing toasts in honour of this or that girl (I could not name you at such a function); but *he*—Elanere—stood up and gave the health of his future bride, Miss Marion Elanere, and as he gave it he smiled significantly at me. Is there any truth in this, Marion?"

"Oh, Dick, Dick! I've tried to tell you ever so many times, but I could not."

He turned her almost roughly away. "Then you are not the girl I loved."

"Oh, please do not be so hasty. Listen, listen! Dick, if you go away without hearing me, you will break my heart, for indeed I love you!" and her face fell forward in her hands as though she fain would hide its blushes.

"Then," said Dick, almost sulkily, "you have a funny way of showing your affection. Look here, Marion, let us be open and honest each with the other. Are you engaged to Eustace Elsmere?—were you ever?"

"No, never, I'll swear that, Dick; but there is a sort of tacit understanding that I am to marry him. The arrangement was made for me."

"Shall you marry him?" demanded Dick, looking very big and formidable.

"If I did, what then?" asked the girl, her spirits rising as his eyes grew kinder.

"You would be false to yourself, to me, and to him. What will you do?"

She tried a moment to coquette with him, but her courage failed her, for she began to understand that for all his gay good humour Master Dick had a will and a temper of his own.

"I think," she whispered, "that you are a great deal nicer than Eustace; and I don't object to your name."

Her voice died away in a fluttering sound, half sob, half laughter.

Dick put his large strong hands upon her shoulders, and held her back a little that he might better see her.

"Let me look at you, Marion, I want to read your very heart in your face. Look at me, my girl; and, with your eyes meeting mine, say, 'I love you, Dick, and will be true to you so long as Heaven gives me memory and breath.'"

Her arms stole up until her hands were clasped behind the bonny yellow curls, as firmly she repeated the vow he exacted, adding,—

"Oh, Dick! my Dick now and for ever! how shall I live when you are gone!"

"It is only for three years, sweetheart," he said, when he had kissed her many times; and we can write by every mail. You are too generous and true to yourself to do me less than justice, whatever happens—if should it be death—dying I shall think of and bless you, my sweetheart, my sweetheart!"

They kissed again and clung together, neither seeking to hide from the other that much travail and pain might lie before them.

"Where are you staying?" asked Marion, when she could think of all of mundane matters, "there isn't any very good place close by?"

"Oh, I shall put up at the 'Wagon and Horses,' where they promise good accommodation for man and beast. In the morning I shall call upon Mrs. Elsmere, and then, little sweetheart, I hope to teach her the lesson that you are not for the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance."

"You will have hard work to do that. But, Dick, they cannot marry me against my will, and we can appeal to father. Surely he will help us; and if not, if not—"

She was nearly crying then.

"If not we must get married. I haven't much of my own—"

"Oh!" cried Marion, "we cannot marry for years to come. Don't think I am afraid of being poor, it isn't that at all; but I can't touch a farthing of my money until I am twenty-one, and we could not exactly live on nothing. You are going away for three years; and oh, Dick! I don't only be as true to me as I will be to you, and neither need have any fear."

"But it may be that everything will look brighter in the morning," he said, his buoyant spirit rising above all its depression. "I shall come over to see Mrs. Elsmere, and then probably go to interview the estimable Eustace; but whatever happens, however dark the clouds may look, never let them teach you forgetfulness of me, or disbelief in my love. Dear little girl! dear little girl! you hold all of good or ill that can befall me in your hands; deal faithfully by me."

With kisses and some tears on Marion's part they said good-bye, and a very uneasy night that young lady spent. She was half afraid of Mrs. Elsmere's angry gibes, and she certainly looked

forward to the meeting and explanation with Eustace, with the reverse of comfortable feelings.

Dick came at the appointed time, but was not allowed to see Marion; but he spent a very miserable quarter of an hour with Mrs. Elsmere, and leaving, went at once to town to interview Eustace. The latter heard his story throughout with no perceptible change of front, and when he concluded drawled,—

"You seemed curiously callous as to the distress you have worked. Until you appeared on the scene, Miss Elsmere was perfectly willing to carry out her part of the arrangement, which is satisfactory in every respect to both parties."

Honest Dick, looked at him in amaze.

"Do you mean to say that you would marry a girl against her will, knowing she disliked you?"

"I think I may safely say I would, for if I could not overcome her prejudice, I would, at least, conquer her will, and teach her that man is the superior being."

"You would have a great stock of impudence to attempt either," said Dick in his boyish manner, "and Marion isn't a girl to stand that sort of nonsense. Look here, Elsmere, will you forego your claim or not?"

"I will not, and you would oblige me by closing this interview."

"Oh, I'll go quick enough, you are not such remarkably pleasant company, and really you have no sense of humour. You are not in the least amusing, and so good-night."

In the morning Eustace went home; and immediately called his cousin and mother to join him in solemn conclave. The girl stood erect and defiant just as three years ago she had stood before Miss Cawcutt, and when charged with her heinous offence, answered proudly,—

"Yes, I do love Dick, and I will marry no one else; I never gave you any affection Eustace, I never promised you anything; and I will not give my hand to one man whilst all my heart and my thoughts are another's."

"I suppose," said Eustace, "you know your father will be greatly offended if you break our contract—and it is my wish—I do not care to appear ridiculous before my friends."

"Oh, a little ridicule is salutary occasionally, and I won't believe father can be so false to his love for my mother, to force me into an uncongenial marriage. At all events, Eustace, I shall never marry you."

"We will see; I shall write your father by this mail."

"I too; surely my word and my wishes should have more weight than yours."

Thus the matter stood; there was only just time enough for Marion to receive a reply from her father before Dick sailed, and she looked anxiously for every mail.

Mrs. Elsmere was scarcely so kind as she should have been, and Eustace was intolerable. So the time wore on until the fifteenth of September arrived. Three days later Dick was to sail—more than a fortnight earlier than he had expected.

Mr. Elsmere's reply was in the girl's hand as she went down to the wicket gate; it ran thus,—

"Children obey your parents; this is the wisest precept I can give you; and I hope you will abide by it. Katie is convinced it is for your good to marry your cousin, and I endorse her opinion. I certainly do not think it wise for you to come out here—unmarried—and as I may hope for other children, I should like to settle you comfortably—at once."

"Your affectionate father,

"DUDLEY ELSMERE."

The same day Dick came; he was not allowed to approach the house, but Marion had been warned by a friendly servant that he would wait her at the old meeting place.

"This is more cruel than we dreamed," he said brokenly; "we may not even write because, of course, our letters will be intercepted. Marion, couldn't we get married right away and defy them all."

"I am quite ready to defy them," the girl answered; "but I won't be married in a hole and corner style; we won't begin our life with

deceit. Oh no! no! no! dear Dick, let us rather show we can trust each other in all, through all, and our love will be all the better for the test it has endured. Then too, you are going on to Poona; the little hill station where my father lives is only a two hours' journey, and I shall give you letters of introduction; remember, you are to make the most of your opportunities; you are to show him—daddy, you know—that you are quite incomparable, and that I—Marion Elsmere—love you first and best; that I am looking always for the day when openly I may wear and rejoice in your name."

After that the parting soon came, and such watch and ward was kept over Marion that her final good-bye to her lover was very brief. She had stolen down to the gate for the last kiss, the last fond word, and as her cheek lay on his breast she could not refrain from tears.

"Oh that I were going with you," she sobbed, "my Dick, my bonny Dick."

He did not answer at once, perhaps he dared not; but he held her fast in his arms, his yellow curls mingling with her dark locks; then he said,—

"God bless and keep you, my beloved, and make the time of our parting short."

"Amen," she answered—then they kissed wildly, fondly; moon and stars seemed blotted out, all before the girl was as a phantom scene—when she felt him withdraw his arm from about her she realised the truth too bitterly, and cried aloud, "Dick! Dick! come back to me"—and in the distance his voice answered,—

"Good-bye."

CHAPTER IV.

DICK's station was in the Bombay Presidency, and once arrived at the end of his journey, having settled down fairly well he went in company with a certain Captain Hauke to visit Mr. Elsmere. He had merely mentioned that he was going out to Peffia House carrying letters of introduction, when Hauke said,—

"Oh, the Elsmeres are friends of mine, so I will ride over with you," and Dick felt flattered by his offer, for the Captain was a man who had seen much service, was extremely popular in Anglo-Indian society, and had been resident at Poona for three years. As they rode along the young man said, with some confusion,

"Do you know Mr. Elsmere particularly well? What sort of fellow is he?"

"Decent, but a jolly deal nicer before he married Kitty Masterson than since; the first Mrs. Elsmere was very popular. I do not infer that the second is not—but their popularity was of a distinctly different order. The first wife was a woman who delighted in doing 'good by stealth,' then 'blushed to find it fame.' You may form a just estimate of her character when I tell you that in that most scurrilous society—Anglo-Indian—not one voice was raised against her. Kitty's ambition is to lead that society and fashion here."

Dick, who had thought of interesting Mrs. Elsmere in his love suit felt his hopes fall, and it seemed a sort of sacrilege to him to hear a man take a married woman's name so familiarly on his lips, but Hauke, who had no key to his thoughts, went on lazily,—

"Of course there's a great deal to be said for Kitty; she is only twenty, and when men of fifty marry girls like that they must be prepared for freaks and frolics. Elsmere as a man of the world, and a keen merchant should not have been guilty of such folly. I am told that he has a daughter only a year younger than his wife; I suppose the old chap dare not have her out here, for fear of ructions, for Kitty has a temper."

Then in a burst of confidence Dick told his story, to which Hauke listened amusedly, saying at the close,—

"My good fellow, don't be in a hurry to forge fetters you can't easily break, and you are years too young to marry yet. Take the girl at her word, and wait the three years. It will give you a chance to look round, and taste enjoyment. Is she—Miss Elsmere, beautiful? But of course she is, or you think so, which amounts to the

same thing. I don't suppose you have seen her in morning *deshabille*, curl papers and all that—cross into the bargain—that's the sort of thing to take the gilt from the gingerbread."

"If," said Dick, loftily, "you knew Miss Elsmere, you would not talk of her so absurdly." Hauke laughed, and after that conversation languished until they came within sight of Peffa Bungalow. Then the captain said,

"This is one of my lucky days. Kitty is alone, and you will have a chance of pleading your cause with her—if you are wise you will in all cases apply first to her; she rules this show."

On the verandah which surrounded the Bungalow sat a lady, clad in elegant diaphanous robes; she was what one might term a *drab* blonde, for the light hair was lustreless and without a suspicion of sunny streaks, her complexion was not good, and the pale blue eyes were arched and fringed by light brows and lashes. The mouth was thin-lipped and wide, and the nose of a nondescript character. And yet by some art known only to herself, Kitty Elsmere was the reigning queen and acknowledged belle of the station. When she recognised Captain Hauke she advanced languidly to meet him, and with a coquettish glance, said,—

"You fall like manna from Heaven upon me. I am all alone and weary of my solitude."

"You will find my friend a godsend then," remarked Hauke, in a free and easy fashion; "he brings all the latest news from home, and comes armed with letters of introduction." Harland, let me make you known to Mrs. Elsmere."

Kitty started.

"Harland! are you Richard Harland?" and her eyes plainly showed her admiration for this handsome son of Anak.

"I plead guilty," laughed Dick, giving the hand she offered a friendly squeeze; "I hope you are not going to send me away because of my presumption."

"We shall see," smiled the lady, "come, sit by me, and tell me all about yourself whilst the servants are bringing refreshments. Captain Hauke, you may take the lounge by my left."

"Thanks, I am going first to see after those last squirrels I got you."

"Nasty little wretches," said Kitty. "Jacko bit me dreadfully yesterday. See," holding out a slender finger for inspection. "I told Shunda to drown him, but I doubt if he did, he is so absurdly fond of the beast."

Hauke shrugged his shoulder.

"No one could ever accuse you of being *fond* of man or beast," he said smiling and she answered in like way.

"At least grant I was fond of one beast or I had not worn this," and she held up her left hand so that the light rested upon her wedding-ring. Hauke laughed.

"Beauty in toils," he said, and went away leaving Dick not very favourably impressed by his hostess' manner. Still, for Marion's sake he must hide this, and soon he warned to his theme, growing so eloquent, that Mrs. Elsmere laying a friendly hand on his said,—

"You are a lover of whom any girl should be proud, and I will do my utmost with Dudley; but he is difficult to move. You cannot conceive how much I have to endure through his obstinacy, and—and I feel you are a friend—I often need one sorely enough—he is actually most absurdly jealous of any attentions paid me—my life is not what I pictured it would be—my marriage was a most unfortunate mistake" (Dick began to feel decidedly uncomfortable), "but," beginning to smile, "I must not be so selfish as to think now of my troubles. I will do my best for you, and you must come out to dine with us next Thursday, unless you have something better to do—Mr. Elsmere will be at home then, and I shall have had time to plead your cause. It shall be my endeavour to get Marion out here—and for thanks I ask that you will call me friend." She gave him her hand, then, with a smile which redeemed her face from plainness, and even as he in good faith took it, Hauke came round the corner, singing to himself,—

"Trust her not, she is fooling thee—
Beware! Beware!"

Kitty looked flushed and angry for a moment,

but hid this dexterously from Dick by the free use of her fan, and to the young man the remainder of their visit was very pleasant.

But as they rode home Hauke said,—

"Don't let that little devil take you in; she's a regular Becky Sharpe, without Becky's brains. She is at her old game, and means to add you to the list of her victims. You are to be the latest captive at her chariot wheels. I know her, and I know the signs of the times. Gad, you might well doubt it, but 'pon my soul for a little while she gulled even me. I was ready to do any and everything for her; but I soon gauged her character and was cured; but if you have any real regard for Miss Elsmere, you won't bring her out here for Kitty to train."

"And I have shared her hospitality," said Dick ruefully, "you should have told me before; and Hauke, if all this is true, why do you pretend to be her friend!"

The captain laughed outright.

"Oh, you'll certainly kill me, Harland. You are the greenest cadet I ever met. Why, Kitty is good fun and everybody visits her; then she and I understand each other perfectly; and what would life be worth here without flirtation—it's too confoundingly hot for anything else—and for all your verandah you will not come out of the fire altogether, scatheless."

But those words of Hauke's weighed very heavily upon honest Dick's mind, so that it needed much persuasion from the captain to induce him to go to Peffa Bungalow the following Thursday.

Kitty received him with demure dignity which brought a grin to Hauke's rather sinister face; then she meekly introduced him to her husband, a heavy-looking man of fifty who said,—

"I have heard all about you from Mrs. Elsmere, and may have something to discuss with you presently. Captain Hauke, the air of this place evidently agrees with you," and the glance he gave the captain was the reverse of friendly.

"The air and the society," returned the other, gaily, "Mrs. Elsmere's charms and your intellectual conversation are always enough to draw me here."

"Humph!" said the host, and Kitty, who was following with Dick, whispered tragically,—

"It is always so, Mr. Harland; is it not terrible for me! I hardly dare exchange a word with any one of the male persuasion."

But Dick was proof against her wiles, and answered coolly,—

"Well, you see your husband adores you, and being so much older than yourself, is naturally a little jealous when other men hover about you."

"But you would not be jealous of the woman you loved? You are far too generous I am sure to offer your *fiancée* such an insult;" and then the pale blue eyes went up to meet his smilingly.

But Dick, looking ahead, answered gruffly,—

"I know I should punch a fellow's head, if, being aware of our betrothal, he paid her more attention than he should. I'd have no one undermining her faith."

"But jealousy is the outcome of suspicion." "Then it is well to give no grounds for suspicion," he answered, and they went in together, Kitty with a frown upon her brow.

In the evening he had an interview with Mr. Elsmere, who at the close remarked,—

"See here, I know next to nothing about you, and Marion is of course a prejudiced party. I will not give my consent to an engagement between you until I have learned what manner of man you are; then you are horribly young to contemplate matrimony, especially on your very slender means. Then, too, it is my wish that Marion should marry her cousin, and that for several reasons; but I shall not coerce her, neither do I forbid you to correspond at regular intervals—once in every three months; for the rest my daughter will remain with her friends until your term of service here has expired. I won't have her life spoiled by a foolish marriage, no, sir I no, sir!" beginning to pace excitedly up and down, "she shan't follow in my footsteps if I can in any way avert such a calamity. Ah! you may look at me; it is true I love Kitty—but there is much that should be altered, she doesn't

study me as she should; but—there, this cannot have any interest for you, only I want Marion to be happy."

"She is not happy in England, and surely you are her proper guardian," said Dick, stoutly; "it isn't right she should be deprived of your care."

"Neither is it right for you to dictate to me, sir; where Marion is she remains until she marries. I don't intend to have my household disturbed by her; she and Kitty would never agree. And I have already conceded so much to you, that you should ask no more."

There the matter rested then, and Dick became a constant visitor at Peffa Bungalow, and but that he was very innocent in such matters he could not have failed to see that Kitty lavished all her favours upon him; only sometimes he wondered that Mr. Elsmere treated him in such surly fashion, and was more than inclined to pity Kitty.

Hauke smiled over the comedy in sardonic fashion; but even he who, better than anyone else knew this woman, did not guess that for the first time in her life she loved, and that all her wicked passion was centred on Dick.

CHAPTER V.

To Marion, the time passed slowly and miserably; Mrs. Elsmere finding the girl was likely to prove contumacious, had decided to try what solitude and utter absence from festivities would do towards compassing her submission; so they remained at the Home Estate, and when Eustace found it convenient, he would run down for two or three days to repeat his injunctions to his mother and persecute his cousin.

He was more than ever resolved that he would marry her; her very coldness and obstinacy made him imagine himself in love with her; and as there seemed no chance that Kitty would present her husband with a child, Marion's dot might be materially increased, and Eustace was not insensible to the advantages of riches.

Autumn faded into winter, a new year was born, and then came spring.

Mrs. Elsmere utterly declined to go to town, knowing very well that they would there meet the Grimshaws, and from them Marion would learn much of Dick.

It had been October when he reached Poona, but as stipulated by her father she had only received one letter up to January, the next would not be due until April, and oh! how hard it was to live without a loving word or encouraging smile!

How drearily the long weeks went by, and if it was so hard to endure so short an absence, what would it be to live through three long years?

Then from being passive tormentors (if such a phrase may be allowed) Mrs. Elsmere and her son developed into active ones, until Marion was driven to extremities.

Then she took a bold resolve; her father had intimated that he did not wish her to go out to him, but if she exercised her own discretion, he could hardly close his doors upon his own child—and at any rate she would be free from Eustace.

"Even if he loved me," she thought disdainfully, "he dared not follow me; he is such a wretched sailor and he hates even calm water."

But how to get away from England; she had very little money—Mrs. Elsmere having reduced her allowance in a spirit of spite.

Suddenly an inspiration came to the girl; she would go to town, Mrs. Grimshaw would help her, and when once she was near Dick her troubles would be ended.

Father will have learned to value him for himself, and perhaps, just because he wants to be rid of me, will gladly give his consent to our marriage," she thought, flushing hotly.

It so happened, that on the morrow her aunt left home to spend a week with some distant friends, and Marion having consulted a paper, wired to Messrs. Locke and Skinner, the great ship-owners; asking if she could have a berth the *Centurion* which was starting in four days.

The reply was satisfactory, so she at once wrote to Mrs. Grimshaw, saying that she was in dire

straits and intended to make confession of everything to her (Mrs. Grimshaw), so she might be expected in Mayfair not later than Thursday. The *Centurion* started on Saturday, the day of Mrs. Elsmere's return.

Duly on Thursday she went to town, having indulged in a white lie to satisfy the servants, telling them she was going to join their mistress, and as she took but little luggage they fully believed her.

Minnie met her on her arrival, and together the girls hurried to the Grimshaws' carriage; fairly started Mrs. Grimshaw said,—

"My dear, what does this mean! Speak plainly—and don't mind Peak, he is as deaf as the adder which stoppeth her ears."

"It means," said Marion, firmly, "that I have left my aunt's house with the intention of never returning; that I am going out to my father—but I have not money enough—and (here she flushed painfully) I hoped—I thought perhaps you would lend me a sufficient sum to take me over—father will pay you—if you won't or can't help me, I must get aboard as quickly as I can, as servant to some luckier body than myself."

"You would make an excellent and efficient maid," remarked Mrs. Grimshaw, with gentle sarcasm; "but really, Marion, I admire your courage."

"And Dick's a darling, so I am sure mother will help you both," quoth Minnie.

So it came to pass, that on the Saturday morning Marion sailed from Portsmouth (her good friends accompanying her so far) *en route* for India. And that night at the Home Estate, if there was not actually weeping and wailing, there was great fear and discomfort.

Mrs. Elsmere sat down at once to write her brother-in-law of his daughter's flight, and when her letter was posted had the consolation of knowing that the Indian mail left only on Friday, consequently Marion would be well away before her letter had passed out of England.

Not a line or a word did the girl leave behind or send afterwards, and she knew the Grimshaws would be loyal to her.

Eustace was furious, but after three days of alternate sulking and raving he said,—

"Let the jade go! After such a scandal as this I would not make her Mrs. Eustace for a fortune."

Then one April day, as Mrs. Kitty sat in the verandah with Captain Hauke, she saw a tall, elegantly dressed girl coming towards them.

She was a brunette of the purest type, tall, graceful, with a *riante* face.

"Gracious!" cried Kitty, starting up with unaccustomed activity, "who is she? Do you know her, Ignatius? Isn't she a new importation?"

Straight to them came the girl, and pausing before the young wife said, with a pretty smile,—

"I am so sorry to trouble you, but if you would tell me where to find Mrs. Elsmere I should be glad. I have walked about a mile, and this is the first house I have discovered."

"I am Mrs. Elsmere," said Kitty, with some stiffness, "but I cannot recall your face."

"Because it is wholly new to you," laughed her visitor. "I hope my coming won't very much inconvenience you—the fact is, I was tired of England and harshness—so I came over to you and father—I am Marion."

"Good Heavens!" cried Mrs. Kitty, for once thrown off her balance, "what on earth will your father say?"

"That he is glad to see me I hope," said Marion, "and indeed, Katie—let me call you so—I hope that we shall be very good friends."

Then Kitty, recovering, introduced Hauke, who after awhile took his leave.

"Jingo!" he thought as he rode homewards, "what ructions there will be at Peffa Bungalow. She's just the loveliest creature I have seen for ages, and to think that she's gone on Dick Harland! Oh, there'll be the devil to pay with Mistress Kitty, because she hates to lose a victim."

Bright and clear rose the next morning, and when Mr. Elsmere came down he found his

daughter ready to pour out the coffee, and minister to his comforts.

"Look here, Marion," he said, "this is all awfully nice, but I don't think that Kitty will approve; she's queer at times, and—and, well I fancy that young Harland has got over his fancy for you,—he's here a good deal too much, and your coming out will complicate matters. Why could you not be sensible—"

She ignored his last words whilst she asked steadily,—

"What makes you think that Mr. Harland has survived his 'fancy for me'?"

"Oh, many things; he's always dangling after Kitty, and I won't have it; though I married a young woman I am not likely to forget that I am on the shady side of fifty, and Katie is a pretty woman (privately Marion considered his taste questionable). I may be pardoned if I sometimes suffer a twinge of jealousy; first it was Hauke, then Mowler, now it's Harland, and she is more in earnest about that young scoundrel than she was about the others."

Marion's face had paled a little, and was scornful as she said,—

"Why, if you cannot trust your wife, or disapprove of these men, don't you forbid them the house? And, father, I do not think that you should suspect Katie without some very good reason."

"I have good reason," he retorted, testily, "Harland is here every day; he'll be coming over presently, and if I'm not mistaken he will not be too pleased to see you. But time will prove," and still muttering to himself, he went out, Marion watching him with half disdainful, half pitiful eyes.

This then was the father she imagined manly and strong, only in error with regard to his very hasty marriage—she found him inconsequent, weak, the jealous, fearful husband of a coquettish shrew. As for his story about Dick she would not give it credence—it was too improbable!

She glanced at her own reflection in an opposite mirror, and thought of Kitty—then she smiled, for Marion was not ignorant of her beauty—rather she delighted in the knowledge of it, although as free as a maid may well be of vanity—it was good to feel her loveliness had won Dick's heart. And as she stood smiling there Katie entered in very *negligé* attire; she wore a loose crimson and gold silk dressing gown, gathered loosely about the waist with an oriental sash, and her fair hair was all spread out upon her shoulders.

"Good-morning, Marion; you will be thinking me a dreadful sluggard, but if I rise too early I invariably suffer for it throughout the remainder of the day. Gracious—Hauke and Dick—I mean Harland, are earlier than usual. How annoying—"

"Won't you run away to dress?" asked Marion, with difficulty keeping her temper under control; why should this woman speak of *her* Dick in such a familiar way? But Kitty, laughing, said—

"Oh, they have seen me in *deshabille* hundreds of times; doesn't Dick look goodly? and oh, the talks we have had together about you."

Marion moved to the verandah; her keen ears had detected that tone of falsehood in Kitty's voice, and with her heart beating furiously, she went to meet him, and by her sudden appearance test his love.

Hauke had told him nothing of her arrival, there was a curious sense of rivalry in the former's mind, and he wanted to satisfy himself that Dick had fallen a victim to Mrs. Elsmere; if he could only prove that, he judged rightly that Marion was too proud a girl to accept love's aftermath.

There in the full flood of sunshine she stood, beautiful, erect, and she could not keep that look of gladness from her eyes.

Bronzed and more manly than when they parted, Dick came on, and when he saw her he gave a great start and a cry—if she lived a hundred years she would never doubt his love having seen his look—that sudden wild flood of colour in the handsome face, that inexpressible joy in the truest, frankest of grey eyes.

In an instant he had leapt from his pony and reached her side; he cared nothing about Kitty

or Hauke, as he flung his arms about the lisome figure, whispering half brokenly,—

"Oh, my darling! oh my darling! for you as for me the waiting was too long."

And then, all unconscious of Hauke's cynicism, and Kitty's devouring rage, he turned to the former saying—

"You see I was right; let me present you to my future wife;" and at the pride in his voice and bearing Mrs. Elsmere grew white.

"Hard hit at last," thought Hauke as he bent over Marion's hand; "there'll be high old times at Peffa Bungalow, and it will be hard if I cannot utilise Madam's jealousy to my own advantage—Harland has been an awful fool—she has juggled him into the belief that he has her sympathy,—that she's a cruelly used woman—now he will feel her claws."

Dick and Marion wandered away by themselves, and Hauke, throwing himself down on a soft rug at Kitty's feet, said—

"Why so sad, fair lady? Has the ever-to-be-revered spouse refused to replenish the purse?"

"Oh," broke in Kitty, "it is not Elsmere this time, and remember that I hate to be ridiculed. Once you would have pitied me if I complained of headache—"

"But you haven't complained of headache, my friend—you are suffering from heartache, as I shall soon if I meet Marion Elsmere often and have no chance of winning her. Kitty, your face betrayed you this morning—I know your secret, what will you do for me if I rob Dick of his sweetheart—"

"Anything—anything," she panted; "only tell me how to act; she shall not have him.—I will do my best to turn her heart to you."

CHAPTER VI.

WITH that unholy compact between them, Kitty and Hauke set to work, his was the brain that planned, hers was the cunning to carry it through.

She was as one gone mad with love, and by every means in her power sought to convey this knowledge to Dick, and finally succeeded so well that he looked forward to meeting her with disgust and dread; and resolved once more to beg Mr. Elsmere's consent to a speedy marriage.

All unwitting of the plot against his peace, he confided this to Hauke, who at once made Kitty aware of his intention, and she was quick to act upon his suggestion. She determined to play the virtuous and outraged wife, to get Dick exiled from the house,—she would have plenty of opportunities of meeting him elsewhere, and then flung back upon herself, her love treated with contumely, surely Marion would give her hand to the man who now paid her idolatrous devotion. Filled with this idea, Kitty set to work; one night whilst Marion and Dick loitered in the gardens, she seating herself upon her husband's knees, began to lavish on him endearments which had now become rare. He was astonished first, then gratified, next he noticed that through all her fondness there ran a vein of sadness, and her eyes would not meet his.

"What is it, Katie?" he asked. "Have you been getting into debt, or have you committed any fault you think too grave for pardon?"

"No, no," she said, "but I have something on my mind which has made us as strangers to each other of late. If I were quite sure you would receive my confidence quietly and act with caution, I would at once give it you."

"I think you can trust me, Katie?"

"But—but—you have not loved me so well of late; you think false things of me."

"Are they false, Katie? If I could think so—if I could only believe your heart my own!"

"It is, oh, indeed it is! And yet I fear to come to you in any time of trouble—you have been so strange that I have thought often he has found out how foolish a body I am, and regrets our marriage."

"No wife, no! There has been a game of cross-purposes—I thought that it was *you* who regretted."

"Never, never; but for your unfounded

jealousy, no woman could be so happy as I. And it is just on this subject I wish to speak with you. You were angry with Captain Hauke and Lieutenant Mowler because they liked my society. Oh you silly husband—it was only that they missed the refinements of European life that they came so often—neither cared two annas for me personally—and that is putting my valuation very low—but dear Dudley, do not be angry—I want you to forbid Mr. Harland the house, and deny him access to Marion. He does not love her—oh, forgive me, forgive me, it is not my fault—but only yesterday he pleaded with me for my heart; he confessed I was more to him than ever Marion had been—hush! let me speak! Until she came we used to talk together of her, and I—oh, you know how foolishly romantic I am—I sympathised with him, and so, perhaps, was kinder than I intended to be. At any rate he either misconstrued my kindness, or presumed upon it.

"The infernal young scoundrel! I'll break every bone in his body."

But as he tried to rise Kitty threw her arms about him.

"Oh no! oh no! have some pity on me—what should I do if harm befall you? Oh do not break my heart—and there would be a horrid scandal—a great many people would believe all that Mr. Harland might say about me. You are known to be jealous. They would conclude you had cause for jealousy (until then her arguments had not moved him much), and they would say that it was a case of May and December—and ridicule you—I could not bear that—I love you so dearly."

He listened then, and listening like the blind fool he was, trusted her, although he had discovered her before in many falsehoods.

"I long to murder him," he said, hoarsely, "but for your sake—if it is your wish—I will forbear to strike—only tell me what to do and I will do it to revenge your wrongs and the dishonour he would put upon me."

"Then forbid him the house, refuse him Marion's hand, send her back to England if you value her happiness—and that you may never, never have cause again to doubt your little wife, I will give you proofs to-night that what I have told you is true. Call Marion in on some pretext, then in a few moments come into the verandah—you and she shall see and judge for yourselves."

This was not difficult to arrange, and when Marion had gone in to her father, Kitty walked into the verandah where Dick was standing.

"Mr. Harland," she said, "I am afraid you will blame me that I am so unsuccessful an ambassadress. I have been pleading for you and Marion, but Mr. Elsmere would not listen; I have done more harm than good. He—oh! how shall I tell you—he is jealous of the little kindnesses you have shown me; he insulted me by pretending to believe you loved me."

"He must be mad!" said Dick, bluntly; "you are a married woman, and I love Marion. I never had a thought warmer than friendship warrants for you."

She caught her breath sharply, for every word he uttered stabbed her to the heart.

"I am sure of that," she answered as steadily as she could, "and I am so grateful, so very grateful to you for your friendship. I would like to feel that it was mine under all circumstances. I am not a very happy woman, but your visits always lift the gloom from about me, may I not hope that for the sake of my good offices, I may always call you friend."

As she spoke she offered her hand; he was young and impulsive; he thought he had very grossly wronged her, and so he held the slender fingers in a kindly clasp, as stooping he pressed his lips to them in courtly fashion. It was then the rush curtains parted and Mr. Elsmere appeared with Marion; almost like a maniac the man rushed towards Dick.

"See," he cried shrilly, "see what sort of fellow your lover is; he would tempt my wife from honour and virtue whilst he professes to love you. He would make me a byword amongst the natives, and you the laughing-stock of every

English man or woman here. After this will you still have faith in him."

Snatching her hand from Dick's hold, Kitty moved to her husband's side and there kneeling, with hidden face, sobbed aloud as one distraught.

Dick held himself erect, his eyes blazing, his cheeks white with rage; then he said in a tone of concentrated passion and scorn,—

"What the deuce do you mean, you old idiot?"

Mr. Elsmere answered incoherently, wildly, but Dick grasped his meaning, and striding forward said,—

"If you were not an old man I'd choke you. By all the gods of this confounded country I would! It is Marion I love, and Mrs. Elsmere has been good enough to interest herself in our little romance. I owe her many thanks; I wish her a happier lot."

"You lie, sir!" foamed Mr. Elsmere. "My wife has already—I mean I do not choose you should make her the object of such marked attentions. And for the future, sir, I beg you to cease your visits; and, on Marion's behalf, I decline your overtures."

Still Kitty knelt and wept. To her the young man appealed,—

"Mrs. Elsmere, for Heaven's sake, clear me! Tell this—Mr. Elsmere—that he is wholly mistaken; that I have never addressed you with anything short of the respect due to you, that our whole conversation has concerned Marion and our future."

But Kitty seemed incapable of speech.

"Poor little girl!" said Mr. Elsmere resting his hand upon her bowed head. "Why are you sobbing so bitterly! I am able to protect you; and you, Harland, go!"

"I will not stay to argue with you, sir, whilst you are so absurdly unreasonable and Mrs. Elsmere so hysterical"—remembering Hauke's words, he regarded her with a somewhat dubious air—"but, at least, I will not leave until I have begged Marion to accept my statement of innocence, and to believe I never have, and never shall, love any other but her own dear self."

The girl moved quickly towards him.

"I do believe you, Dick darling. I should be desperate if I could not. There are unseen forces opposed to us, but we shall conquer them yet; and, until the good time comes, we will trust each other."

He kissed her loyal lips.

"Heaven bless you, dear!"

And then, as she showed signs of breaking utterly down, he set her gently aside, and went out.

Life at Peffa Bungalow did not go on very pleasantly after this. Captain Hauke came and went, devoting himself so assiduously to Marion that her father felt no longer any fear of him. Then he asked for her hand; but, despite Katie's scoldings, Mr. Elsmere's petulant complaints, and Hauke's entreaties, she answered,—

"No. I have given my heart away, my hand shall go with it!"

The time had come for action. The confederates, meeting in the bazaar, discussed matters eagerly, but in low tones. If they would win they must be bold, and strike whilst stories of Dick's flirtations were always reaching Marion, and he was incensed that she should so often meet Hauke, whose character he was only now beginning to know. He was an utter libertine, and it was social ruin for any woman to have her name too closely linked with his. Kitty, knowing this, laid her plans accordingly.

On an awfully sultry evening the whole station turned out to witness a native concert; that is, with the exception of Marion and a servant. The regiment at Poona were expected to be there in full force, and perhaps it was owing to this fact that the girl declined to go on the plea of a headache, saying the tom-toms would prove too much for her.

Kitty's eyes flashed into sudden and unexpected brilliance as she said, demurely,—

"Shall I stay with you, dear?"

Marion answered as she had anticipated,—

"No, thank you; I prefer to be alone."

So Kitty skipped away, and, safely in her room, wrote a note to Hauke, despatching it by a

native. Then, smiling evilly, she submitted herself to her maid's hands.

She left Marion with a Judas kiss, and the girl, harassed and weary with long-continued persecutions and struggles, lay down trying to read.

She almost succeeded in sleeping, and it was growing very late when a strange Hindoo brought a message to her. He said he came from the Sahib Harland, who was lying at a bungalow, three miles away, cruelly hurt by a tiger; he feared he could not live, and begged she would go to him at once.

White as death the girl rose, took a light wrap, and saying, "Lead on," followed the man to danger and probable disgrace.

She asked the man no questions, her heart was too torn with grief to make speech easy, or even possible. And he went on swiftly before her, brushing the grasses and brambles from her way. The road they took led to Poona, and she wondered a little why they had carried Dick so far, for surely her father would not have refused the shelter of his roof to a dying man.

Her Dick, her bonny lover, dying! Her brain reeled with the thought, as over and over again she prayed in her heart "Oh, Heaven, in mercy take me too!"

If she had not been so possessed by her grief she would have noticed that all about the bungalow was very quiet; in fact it had been empty for some time until Hauke, for purposes of his own, had hired it.

As they entered the verandah, the native pointed out the room in which the "sahib" was lying, then disappeared, and Marion went hurriedly forward. Save for a recumbent form the apartment was untenanted, and with the cry of "Dick, Dick!" she made a rapid movement towards the man, then suddenly stopped, caught her breath looking at him with wild eyes.

"Captain Hauke! What does this mean? Where is Dick?"

He laughed as he caught her by the wrist.

"It means, Marion, that, remembering the old adage, 'all is fair in love and war,' I have brought you here by strategy to hear the story to which you have so long refused to listen."

In her dazed condition she hardly understood at first all his words implied, but asked,—

"And Dick is not hurt; it was all a lie?"

"All a lie. At present, I suppose, he is making love to Kitty."

She wrenched herself from his hold.

"You cowardly brute," she said through her clenched teeth, "if for a moment I were a man I would kill you!"

"Marion!" and his face was white with passion, "for your own sake do not go too far."

CHAPTER VII.

"WHY should I fear you?" she demanded, contemptuously. "If I had a brother to avenge me you would not have dared thrust this insult upon me; but, little as my father loves me, I do not think he will permit it to pass;" and she would have left him, but he barred her passage.

"You will be wise to listen to me, because you have every reason to fear me. Marion, I love you dearly, so dearly that I would marry you even though you hated me like the devil, because in time I should win your love—no woman yet could successfully resist me—but, on the other hand, I have desired no other woman for my wife. You are miserable at home—just one too many in the family circle—better give yourself to me and learn what it is to be loved for yourself and yourself only. I am old enough to know my own mind. I have sown my wild oats—"

"Be quiet," she broke in, sharply, "every word you utter is a disgrace to yourself and an insult to me. Would you offer me the worst part of your life, and the dregs of your passion? Captain Hauke, let me pass; and remember that my final answer is no! I would die rather than marry a man who could so ensnare a girl."

"It is easy to talk of dying," he retorted; "none but a coward fears death; but will it be so easy to live year in year out for the term of your natural life under a cloud. To have the

finger of scorn pointed at you, to know that every honest woman regards you with suspicion, and no man who is wise would give you his name!"

"What do you mean?" she asked in a strange, chill voice; "answer me; I have done nothing for which I need blush."

"But, my dear girl, you cannot convince the world so easily of your innocence. Look here, Marion, I will be frank with you. If persuasion will not win you, then force must. This is how the land lies. I have never been renowned as saintly—indeed, I am counted rather the reverse; so you may readily understand that should it become known you were with me here at this extremely late hour your reputation would suffer."

"You devil!" broke from the girl's white lips; and lifting her hand she struck the wicked smiling mouth; "but," she added, wildly, "it need never be known. No one will accept your word in lieu of mine."

"I think you are mistaken, sweetheart. I have not bungled over my plot. Do you suppose I shall let you go, having trapped you? I am not so mad! Promise by all you hold sacred to marry me when I will or I will keep you here until the fellows come along and find us together. We are going to have a right royal spread in honour of the occasion."

Her horror held her silent, and for a brief while he thought he had conquered the proud spirit, the pure heart; but she quickly undeceived him. Throwing the light wrap back from her throat she said,—

"Kill me, I shall not scream, or even care overmuch. I will not live with a tarnished name, neither will I marry you!"

For all his rage and disappointment he could only admire her courage, and love her the more for her open defiance.

"Marion," he pleaded, "have mercy on yourself and me! Marion, darling!"

And he caught her in his arms, whilst he kissed her lips passionately. With a strength of which he had not thought her capable she struggled with him, screaming aloud, "Help! help!" She felt her powers of endurance failing, she realised what a horrible thing it would be to tell abroad that she was Ignatius Hauke's only companion at such a late hour; and whilst a sob tore at her throat, shrieked again, "For Heaven's sake, help!"

And, as though in answer to her passionate appeal, footsteps and voices were heard approaching. They smote like thunder upon her ears, for they were the deep notes of men's voices, the heavy tread of men's feet.

Hauke loosed her, and regarding her triumphantly, said,—

"Yes or no, Marion. If yes, I can conceal you; if no, you must face the consequences."

"I will," she answered, although she was deadly white, and as she spoke some one rushed through the verandah, sprang upon Hauke and shaking him like a rat, beat him furiously with the butt end of his whip. It was Dick, and so sudden, so unexpected had the onslaught been that the captain had never any chance of resistance.

Dick had the strength of a giant, and was too furious to show any mercy; but for the intervention of his companions, and Marion's cry, "Oh do not kill him!" he would probably have given his foe a free passage to another world. As it was, with a gesture of utmost loathing, he flung him down upon the ground, where he lay senseless and bleeding, and taking the girl's hand led her gently away, followed by his admiring companions and supporters.

She was crying bitterly, but when she had a little recovered her scattered senses, she said,—

"Oh Dick! Dick! what must you think of me?"

"That you are the best and dearest girl in the world. I know all the devilish plot against you, and I came with the fellows as soon as I could. This has been a night of adventure. Mrs. Elsmere—Heaven forgive her, for I never will—came to the concert, and was evidently in high spirits; they soon failed her. Somehow, nobody quite knows how, her dress became ignited, in an instant she was a mass of flames. I helped to put them

out. Most of the natives had bolted. When we had extinguished the fire, we found she was terribly burned about the face and throat. Indeed McCully (our doctor, you know) openly expressed his opinion that the shock to her system would prove too much for her, even apart from the injuries she had received. She was mad with fear of death, and cried out for me. I went to her, and in the presence of them all she confessed her sin and Hauke's."

He put an arm about her, she trembled so violently.

"Sweetheart, sweetheart! don't break down now; or, if it rests you to cry, you shall cry to your soul's content, if only you will pause long enough to kiss me now and again and say, 'I love you Dick!'"

"Oh, I do, I do—but I am all unstrung—Dick—I am sorry for her—and I love you dearly."

EPILOGUE.

Captain Hauke found it advisable after his recovery to leave the service, for the story of his diabolical scheme against Marion was so bruited abroad that no man of honour or standing would acknowledge him.

Kitty did not die, but lived to bear the full punishment of her sin; disfigured beyond power of description, she could no longer hold sway in her little kingdom; despised and detested, she slunk away into solitude, living on the generosity of the husband she had wronged, and who now refused to see or correspond with her; and whose declining years are spent in happily witnessing the happiness of Marion and "her Dick."

Eustace Elsmere is still a bachelor, and likely to remain so, not that he loves, or ever loved Marion. But that he fails—with all his perfections—to satisfy the mind feminine.

THE END.

A WOMAN'S TRIUMPH.

—102—

CHAPTER XXVII.

LADY SETTEFIELD looked upwards at her sister-in-law as she gave that strange little laugh.

"Do you want to speak to me on anything very particular, Pat?" she asked, her small hands pausing an instant in her task of sorting out the ribbons. She spoke with seriousness, but there was a curious gleam in the depths of her most beautiful eyes that seemed tinged with a sort of malice.

Lady Patricia answered "Yes," to her question quietly and gravely.

Miriam at once dismissed her maid, she was absolutely at her ease.

"Now we can be comfortable," she said lightly, as the door closed and they were alone.

Patricia felt her heart commence to beat very quickly; Miriam's self-control, her calm indifference of manner, her bright look and amused tone made her task doubly difficult, in fact, almost impossible.

She drew a sharp breath, and her pale face seemed to grow a shade paler.

"Dear Patricia, don't stand there, you will be so tired; draw up that chair. You know you are still looking very white and ill, dear, notwithstanding all Maxton's nursing."

Miriam's tone was full of the truest affection and solicitude combined.

Patricia did not move nor obey her sister-in-law's wish. She stood looking down into the fire, turning her eyes resolutely from that lovely young figure with its festoons of coloured ribbons and the gleam of the jewels on the delicate hands and wrists.

She paused for a long time, and Miriam's face wore a slightly amused expression while she waited for the other to speak.

Patricia broke into the subject at last hurriedly, and yet her voice was steady and cold, and a strong resolution rang out in each note.

"Miriam," she said, "I have come here to speak to you on something that has troubled me very—very much of late. I hope you will forgive me for annoying or hurting you; believe me I do not approach you on this subject without long, deep thought. I—"

She broke off.

Miriam was leaning forward; her beautiful face now expressed some curiosity, almost bewilderment, as though she could not quite follow the drift of Patricia's conversation.

"Of course, Pat, dear, I know all that," she said, in a semi-soothing way which was exceedingly irritating. "There can be no reason why you should want to hurt or vex me. First, as I can think of no subject you want to introduce that could vex me, please go on, dear."

Patricia glanced at her for an instant; once again she was conscious of that baffled sensation, of that wave of contempt mingled with fear at the realisation of the unscrupulousness and the cunning of this lovely woman's nature.

Her tone was, if possible, more cold as she went on,—

"I have to speak to you, Miriam, on the subject of the Butlers," she said.

"The Butlers!" Miriam repeated the name in some surprise. "The Butlers, Pat, dear! Who are they, and what are they; and why must you speak to me about them? I don't know any people of this name. Are they neighbours of ours?"

Patricia's cheeks had a touch of colour.

"Miriam, please do not prevaricate, or play with my words," she said almost passionately. "You know very well; far—far better than I can tell you, what right I have to speak to you about these people—Jane Butler, from Linchester, and her son, Richard."

Miriam rose with great dignity.

"Am I to understand that you accuse me most directly of telling a falsehood, Patricia?" she asked in a quiet way that was, nevertheless, full of anger.

Patricia stretched out her hand in a sort of hopeless gesture.

"Heaven knows I wish to think nothing of you but what is good, and kind, and just, Miriam. It pleases you to deny all knowledge of these two people; if I, in my turn, deny you the right to claim such ignorance, it is because I am forced to do so—because I know that you have some very strong secret reason for wishing to shut away all thought and discussion of this woman and of her son. You are not long or well acquainted with me, otherwise I think you would know that I never make any statement without first having satisfied myself most thoroughly that there is good ground on which to found that statement."

Miriam laughed in a silky fashion.

"I know, of course, that you are everything that is high and noble, and most honourable, Patricia," she answered slowly, "and having granted you so much I may be forgiven, perhaps, for suggesting that despite all your care and phenomenally developed wisdom it is possible for you to make a mistake just like a more ordinary everyday mortal."

Miriam's smooth voice could accentuate a sneer to perfection. She stood now with one hand leaning on the marble mantel-shelf, and one little foot on the broad fender; she swayed to and fro in an easy amused kind of way as she spoke.

"I will pass over your conviction of my falsehood and general unworthiness," she went on, her voice less sneering, more grave now. "I am perfectly aware that you have been prepared from the very first to find me as black as any woman could well be. You have never been at any trouble to hide your jealousy and hatred of me, Patricia. Your bitterness has been, in fact, a constant cloud over the happiness of my short married life. For myself I should have continued to bear with this unnoticed by even one single word, but you see you will not allow me to do so. You have thrown down the glove, and I must for my own pride's sake arise and answer your challenge!"

"I make no challenge," Patricia replied to this coldly, "neither have I any desire to enter into a word dispute with you. What you think of my character or what I think of yours has

little to do with the matter before us now; imaginary sentiments must always give way to plain facts."

Miriam looked at her small hand admiringly; she was moving it to and fro in the light, watching the gleams flash from her jewelled rings with as much pleasure as a child would have evinced; there was nothing serious either in her manner or expression. She looked exactly what she intended to convey, the picture of a woman who was bored, but who was prepared to bear the *ennui* of the moment with good natured tolerance. She yawned a little as she answered Patricia.

"Naturally," she said, "everybody knows the value of facts against theories, but then the facts must be good ones you know, Patricia, and if you don't mind, dear, I should like you to set forth your facts of this matter, which, I confess, seems to me to be rather the case of a big mountain being built up from a very tiny molehill, and then when you have given me your facts I will give you mine; for now that the subject has been introduced I find there are one or two little points touching the question of these Butlers—that is their name, is it not? which seem to me to require some explanation."

Before Patricia could have made any reply, if she had desired to do so, which she did not at the immediate moment, Miriam went on speaking in the same half weary, half contemptuous manner.

"Just now," she said, "you remarked that the question of our individual feelings and opinions concerning our two characters had very little to do with the matter in hand. Now I beg to differ from you, Patricia. Let us review the position. Your brother for some strange reason or other," Miriam smiled faintly as she glanced upwards and caught a reflection of her loveliness in the mirror set above the fireplace, "Your brother for some reason or other has done me the great honour to fall in love with me, and to make me his wife. You, for some reason, which I am afraid I must call by the name of jealousy, most mean and unjust, as jealousy generally is, have from the very first set yourself against me. You tried to put an impassable barrier between Danvers and myself; you failed. Nothing daunted, however, by your failure, you have determined to find some small foundation on which to build up a fabrication of evil suggestion and malicious suspicion against my character. I will not be such a fool as to pretend now that I do not understand the drift of your present conversation. You have put it into your head that there is a secret in my life, and to gratify your spite and work a sort of protection for yourself you have set about making a big coup out of circumstances which surround you just now, and which I confess most women would find embarrassing and possibly dangerous."

Miriam turned her splendid eyes from the reflection of her image, and from the jewels on her hand, and she let them rest languidly, insolently, on the pale drawn pure pre-ud face beside her. Under her quiet languid manner, however, she was full of excitement of furious anger and hot intent to hurt with all the power she possessed.

"You have come here, so you said," she continued, "because you were anxious to talk to me about the Butlers; having started so far I will now allow that I am just as anxious, Patricia, that we should discuss the matter as you are, for if my fears are right your position is exceedingly uncomfortable, and you may be glad of a woman's advice and helping hand. I will help you most willingly, though I don't fancy many other people would show you so much generosity. You see you are not treating me well. That you should have some mysterious trouble in connection with this working woman and her son is a regrettable fact, but that you should try to save yourself in your brother's eyes by passing on this mysterious trouble to my shoulders is something more than regrettable, it is very nearly a crime!"

Miriam's eyes still rested coolly, easily on Patricia's face. She saw the big dark eyes dilate and fill with an expression that was not easily describable.

She did not intend to wait to let Patricia

recover herself, she meant to carry matters on with the highest of high hands, and strange as it might and did seem even to herself, she knew that her table turning would prove the most valuable aid she could have obtained at this particular moment.

"*L'audace toujours l'audace!*" she said swiftly to herself. Outwardly she went on speaking with calm deliberation.

"Facts are obstinate things, Patricia, on that we are both agreed; and they cannot, alas! be removed by mere words. It will, perhaps not surprise you to know that already your brother is perplexed, and I fear concerned, about your connection with this young man—he was speaking to me on the matter this afternoon—and I was quick to see that he was puzzled to understand exactly the amount of interest you have taken in this particular *protégé* and your ill concealed agitation at his ill-health. You may be sure that I did my best to change the drift of my husband's thoughts, and I have certainly checked them for a time if not for altogether. You see, Patricia, by your own actions you have exposed yourself to comment if not to actual suspicion. It is not customary for a girl in your position to take such deep interest in a young man who, though he is outwardly placed as a subordinate in your brother's household, is—so Danvers tells me—evidently a man of refinement and of a good class in life. Now," Miriam changed her voice very cleverly, "now, Patricia, will you not confide in me? I am your brother's wife; the honour of your brother's family can never be dearer to anyone than to me. You are only a girl, and if through folly or—"

Patricia gave a deep, shuddering sigh. She had stood like one petrified throughout Miriam's most infamous and insulting speech.

The very blood in her veins seemed to run cold with horror, not merely at the vile words uttered against herself, but at this worse than realization of the cruel and unscrupulous depths of Miriam's nature.

To measure swords with such a creature as this was worse than foolish, it was disastrous; it was to bring a hurt upon herself as bitter as death.

She had felt from the beginning that to approach Miriam on this subject would be absolutely futile.

She had only done so because her whole soul revolted against the thought of condemning any living creature without cause or justification.

Had not circumstances forced her hand, Patricia would have gone to her grave silent to Miriam or to others, but the fact that indirectly she had been the cause of bringing about a climax of some sort, that had it not been for her Richard Butler would never have entered into the precincts of her brother's life, had worked as we know with such painful struggles in Patricia's mind, and had impelled her to expose herself to such an interview as this, and to what was worse, the absolute knowledge of Miriam's great unworthiness and cunning wickedness.

That Lady Settefeld would have struggled in some way out of the difficulty whatever it might be, Patricia was well prepared, but that the form of her evasion and own salvation could have been put in the present form, Patricia had not and could not have conceived under any possibilities.

The first hot rush of anger passed, however, the girl's pride came to her aid. She stood for so long a time silent that Miriam began to feel restless.

"If you are not inclined to accept my help and my advice, Patricia," she said, shortly, and she turned and flung herself into her chair again, and began fingering the many-coloured ribbons, "I don't see much use in prolonging a conversation which is neither edifying nor agreeable."

Patricia was silent another half moment, and when she spoke she did not look at the woman near her.

"You are right," she said; and cold and proud as her voice had often been, Miriam had never heard it as it sounded now. "There remains nothing more to be said between us. All is said—all is clear—all." The girl's head bowed a little and her voice grew fainter. "All is horrible!"

Turning like one who is weak and blind Patricia

almost groped her way to the door, and opening it, passed out slowly, leaving Miriam sitting with her hands fallen on her knees, and her delicate, lovely face set and hard and almost cold for the moment.

Those three last words said with such an anguish of pain—such an absolute sense of dread of aversion struck her in her most vital part—her vanity.

"All is horrible!" so Patricia had said, giving forth the words with a sigh of unutterable misery that even Miriam's callousness could not reject. The excitement of her venomous insult died away in this moment, and she had a dull ache in its place. For perhaps the very first time in her existence Miriam realised the poor black thing encaused within her lovely body which she called her soul.

It was a new experience for her, and it hurt her exceedingly—hurt her not only in the knowledge but by comparison, for just as she was so contemptuous in her selfishness, in her lawless disregard for honour or for the feelings of others, so Patricia, this proud, pure girl, was noble, generous, thoughtful, and tenderly unselfish.

There were many pictures to rise before Lady Settefeld's mind in this moment of introspection and retrospection, all freighted with deeds that were not merely vanities but crimes.

She shivered as with the touch of a chill wind as she sat there in a dainty boudoir, the costly evidences of her husband's love scattered lavishly about her. Out of the mental background there rose clear and distinct the features of a dead man—a man who had loved her no less than Settefeld did—a man who, for her sake and to gratify her vanity, had squandered his whole substance at her bidding—a poor weak, clinging creature, whose cruel fate had been hastened and aided by her revengeful hands, whose actual death had been the outcome of her passionate vituperation and spoken hate!

The picture was set in a frame of remorse to Miriam in this moment—remorse and something else—fear—strong, deep terrible fear! She was on the brink of a precipice.

Patricia knew all her danger; but it was not Patricia she feared. The girl would be silent all her life, not for her sake, but for the sake of her adored brother. No, it was not Patricia that she feared, it was the coming circumstances.

Richard Butler was dying, so they said; but what if he did not die!

What if before his death he spoke out that truth which concerned her? He was her enemy. Ah! on that point there was not a shadow of doubt. Just as he had loved, nay worshipped, the man she had ruined, so he had hated her!

Miriam was conscious of baffled anger as she sat there thinking fearfully, hurriedly.

So all the time Jane Butler had lied to her, and the son about whose whereabouts she had professed entire ignorance had been living with Cyril Lindsey, ostensibly his servant in reality his friend, his brother.

The devotion that this valet had given to the young man had been a fact Miriam had never thoroughly understood, and which she had resented in the days when her love ruled the whole of Lindsey's life.

He had at her instigation at once quarrelled with his valet and had dismissed him. The man had gone without a word; but he had never been far away.

In whatever place Cyril Lindsey might be there would the form of his dismissed servant be seen also.

In those few weeks of folly in which Miriam, for the sake of Lindsey's supposed wealth, had consented to be his wife, and had travelled from one Russian town to another with her husband, it had been one of her greatest annoyances that the face and figure of Lindsey's old valet was always to be seen.

She hated the man, and she knew that he hated her. She had had no clue to the reason of the man's real devotion to Lindsey until this moment when the fact that Jane Butler's son was identical with Lindsey's servant, revealed to her the tie that had bound him to love and care for the hapless young fellow.

She had often given a thought to this servant,

and wondered what had become of him. She had hoped he was dead. The trouble that had fallen so swiftly upon Cyril Lindsey might, she had said to herself, have fallen upon this man also. She devoutly hoped that it had, and from the fact that he had never crawled after Lindsey on his return to England, seemed to prove that her wish was a fact.

Now Miriam had to unearth this dead man from the tomb in which her imagination had buried him, and set him before her as a being who not only would desire to give her all the punishment in his power, not only on his own score but on the score of her treatment to his beloved master and foster brother, but who by some extraordinary evil fate had been brought actually into her very life with therefore every opportunity for working his will against her. Miriam threw down her ribbons and paced to and fro for a long while.

She had an amazed sense upon her at this moment at the calmness, the reckless way in which she had worked out her life independent of the immense possibilities of danger and disaster that had threatened her. Looking back from where she stood now it seemed to her well-nigh incomprehensible how she had managed to accomplish so much against such almost overwhelming odds. It had been a long chapter of lies and deceit all through.

To deceive her aunt and to hoodwink that gentle creature had been the very simplest of matters.

But the world was not peopled by Alicia Stapletons only, and Miriam drew her breath sharply as she conjured up the risks she had run and the depth and blackness of the abyss on which she had lived so long.

It was extraordinary that her connection with Cyril Lindsey had never seemed to travel to England. That the facts about her hasty and most ill-judged marriage had never been disclosed in the very faintest way.

Naturally she attributed this to the fact that the few weeks she had spent with the man as his wife had been passed in out-of-the-way Russian towns. The privacy of their marriage had been necessary because of the guardians who were supposed to take care of Cyril Lindsey's enormous fortune.

He was not to attain his majority till a few months later; but when he brought Miriam to be his wife, and pleaded his reasons for secrecy, she had not felt there was either danger or an objection in hoodwinking these guardians for a little while.

She had never had an affection or even a fancy for Lindsey, but the report of his colossal fortune had attracted, and certainly his expenditure had been lavish enough when she had first met him in St. Petersburg to make her believe absolutely in the truth of this rumoured wealth.

A few weeks after their marriage, however, Miriam was quickly awakened from her belief. The truth came out, Lindsey was a pauper, or at least a pauper in her eyes. The money he had flung about had been all the available capital he could touch—a miserable five thousand pounds or thereabouts. Once spent he had nothing between him and starvation, but a couple of hundred a year. More than this (though this was bad enough) he was a gambler, and had drifted, he hardly knew how, into the hands of some of the most unscrupulous blackguards to be met with on the Continent, a mixture of nihilists, anarchists, Heaven knew what. For some deed of folly in connection with these men the police were on Lindsey's track. He was a suspected man in Russia, and Miriam was not long in learning what this suspicion meant. Frenzied with rage she not only left him instantly, seizing all the jewels and valuables she could, but put herself in the protection of the police, and brought them to bear upon him.

Lindsey's story after her departure was never clearly told to Miriam, but she guessed enough to follow it out. In the hands of the police it would be an easy matter to get all or any information from the wretched young man, and once given it would be an equally easy matter for the infuriated men whom his information would betray to work out a vengeance against their betrayer.

Miriam remembered now how, when back again secure in her aunt's house (to whom she had given a most plausible description of a long visit she had been supposed to pay to some new and grand friends she had made in St. Petersburg), she had read vague reports dealing with some Nihilistic discoveries, and the punishments dealt out to the arrested men, and her heart had thrilled when one time there had come the information that an Englishman had got implicated in the plot, and would share in the punishments given.

Then time had flown, and it was not until Mr. Butler had come to seek her, bearing a message from the man she was forced to call her husband, and whom she had prayed might be rotting in the mines of Siberia, that Miriam realised the full value of her miserable mistake.

What followed then has been set down in the story already.

Everything had fallen most strangely, almost easily into the way she wished, and nothing very terrifying had happened until this day, when she had come face to face with the man who had served Cyril Lindsey so faithfully, and who had hated her with a deep and silent hate.

The realisation that this old enemy was one and the same with Richard Butler brought with it the undoubted fact that Butler must have known everything that happened, both at the time of her first marriage, then afterwards, and then later still.

And now she stood absolutely in the hollow of this man's hand.

What would he do?

Would he live to ruin her?

How could she circumvent him? How meet his statements?

Lies were so easy of course, but then they must be good feasible lies? Lord Settefeild was not a man to be satisfied with vague, airy statements or prevarications, however gracefully given.

She had been more or less comfortable during the afternoon that had passed, because she had seen that her husband had known nothing, and because moreover she received the news that Richard Butler must die soon.

But now since Patricia's visit, since she had been forced to see that one person knew there was some bond between this man and herself, Miriam's calmness had gone again.

She was furious, and she felt ill; but greater even than these feelings was her intense hatred for Patricia, her desire to triumph over all her difficulties because there would be a triumph over Patricia.

She had not forgotten that little discovery she had made about Patricia's heart, about her feelings towards Thorold Musgrove, and despite the serious troubles which menaced her Miriam made a solemn vow to herself that she would find ways and means to hurt Patricia through this knowledge.

Thorold's changed demeanour to herself was something more than an annoyance to Miriam, but she of course attributed it to every cause except the right one.

That a man who had loved her as Thorold had done, so wholly, so truly, could possibly have been forced by her conduct to realise the folly of his love, and to change it, was certainly something Miriam's vanity could not possibly permit or even imagine!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THANKS to Babs, the evening passed away merrily enough.

It was not easy for anyone to resist being amused by the child's quick flow of spirits and irresistible happiness.

Patricia had come down to dinner.

She had gone through an hour of agony when she had got back from Miriam's room to her own. Her inclination was not only to avoid all chance of meeting this cruel, worthless woman again, but of leaving the house without delay and putting miles and miles between her and all association with her brother's wife.

Unfortunately, as she had learnt long ago,

there is no chance in the world of everyday life and duty for the development of inclination.

She would of course be able to leave Belton in a day or so, and that she determined she would do, independent of anything Danvers might say; but until that moment, if she desired to avoid bringing unpleasant remark or discovery to her brother, she must act on exactly as she had done all along.

She was pale and ill looking, but for that there was a good excuse.

She tried not to look at Miriam, not to think of her; but it was a difficult task when at every turn the brilliant, beautiful, young creature flitted about her.

Miriam's spirits were not one whit less bright and merry than Babs's.

She laughed, she sang, she danced, she flitted about like a living sunbeam.

"She is such a child," Alicia Stapleton said tenderly, to Lord Settefeild. "Mimi will never grow up, Danvers, you must not expect it."

The man smiled.

"Why should she change? She is perfect in my eyes," he answered.

Her power over him was illimitable. At a glance from her eyes, at a coaxing word, at a touch of her small fingers, the man would turn and do anything and everything she desired.

"Danvers thinks Mimi is an angel," Babs cried once during the evening. "Oh, you need not blush, Danvers, you know you do! It's very silly of you, you know, because Mimi is not one bit better than anybody else."

"A prophet in his own country, you know the rest."

Miriam laughed, sending her husband a glance from her eyes that made his heart thrill.

"Danvers, I hope you will not believe anything nasty of me, darling."

Settefeild took her hand and carried it to his lips, and then he pinched Babs's ear.

"No one could call you an angel, you imp!" he declared.

Babs made a moue.

"Do you suppose I want to be one?" she asked with supreme contempt. "I wish I were a man! Danvers, just fancy, if I were a man I could be a soldier and shoot people!"

"Well, you need not necessarily go into the army to achieve that, Babs," Settefeild answered, as they all laughed. "All you have to do is, take your gun, station yourself in a well-crowded thoroughfare, and pot at your fellow men as much as you like. You are sure to have some success!"

Bab's face looked radiant at this.

"I think I will try."

"What a blood-thirsty little individual to be sure! Musgrove, you had better have a care, your life is no longer safe, I assure you."

"Oh, I would never hurt Thorold, never!" Babs cried, emphatically. "Thorold is my best friend, he has promised to do all sorts of things for me."

At this naive declaration there was another peal of laughter.

Patricia was grateful to the child for her nonsense, it helped to make the moments pass where, otherwise, they must have dragged most terribly. The cotillon was danced under great difficulties.

There was a scarcity of partners, and it ended at last in a *pas de deux* by Babs and Lady Settefeild.

Thorold, who had stood watching and applauding the dance, turned his head once to look at Patricia, and instantly he was struck by the strange expression of her eyes and lips as she sat at a distance following Miriam's figure as it moved about like some feather.

He made his way to Patricia's chair.

They had barely exchanged one word during the evening.

She coloured faintly as she looked up and saw him.

Dolly, at the piano, playing snatches of waltzes and mazurkas, cast a glance at them both. It was a tender glance.

Dorothy Stapleton was thorough, and in her renunciation of all hope for her own little lost dream she gave full freedom to her desire to see Patricia's happiness.



PATRICIA'S HEAD BOWED A LITTLE, AND HER VOICE GREW FAINTER AS SHE SAID, "ALL IS HORRIBLE!"

Thorold sat down beside the big chair in silence.

He was content to be quite silent, content to be near her, to look quietly on her pale face, so pure, so sweet, so beautiful!

And Patricia! The very knowledge of his near presence brought her a sense of help, of comfort. The heaviest weight of her heart's burden seemed to slip from her a little as she felt this comfort.

They sat in absolute silence.

All at once Miriam stopped in her dance, she had caught sight of those two sitting together in a far off corner.

The sight infuriated her. Thorold belonged to her, so she had decreed; he must belong to her always, or, at least, until she were tired of him. To any other person in the world she might have resigned him calmly. But to Patricia—!

She came flitting down the room, a fairy-like creature in her pink gossamer robes and beautiful gleaming pearls.

"Thorold, come and dance with me," she said autocratically. "Come at once!"

He rose to his feet, but he looked confused, like a man aroused suddenly from a deep dream, and bewildered by the action.

"Dance!" he said, laughing hurriedly. "Dear Lady Settefeild, you do not know what you are asking. I am an elephant, and elephants do not dance."

"They do sometimes!" Babs cried, as she came twirling towards them, "and you are not an elephant. Don't dance with Mimi, dance with me, Thorold!"

"I would fly, if I could," Thorold said, lightly, "and I assure you that flying would be equally as easy as dancing to me. Lady Settefeild, I am so sorry. You can imagine what it costs me to deny myself this honour and pleasure."

Miriam dropped him a curtsy.

"Well, then, come and talk to me. I was constrained to take pity on you. You were looking so miserable, you poor things!"

Patricia's pale face coloured hotly, but Babs came to her rescue by embracing her warmly.

"Take Thorold away, then. I am going to stay with Lady Patricia," she declared.

"I am going to bed," Patricia said, in her gentle tired way. "Good-night, little Babs, dance and be happy, to-morrow we will have a long, long walk, you and I, and you shall tell me all your news."

"Good night, dear Lady Patricia," Babs said, lovingly. She watched Patricia mount the stairs slowly, and then she made her way over to the piano where Dolly was.

"You know, Doll," she said, in a mysterious way, "I am sure dear Lady Pat is not happy, her voice was so low, and she had tears in her eyes when she turned away. She turned quickly, but I saw them all the same."

"She is not strong," Dolly said quickly.

After a few moments she managed to make her escape from the piano, and she ran swiftly up the stairs to Patricia's room.

She knocked gently, and hearing no sound she opened the door noiselessly.

Patricia was crouched down on the floor, her face buried in the cushions of the sofa. She was not crying violently, but Dolly felt the paroxysm of grief was terrible, strong, terribly bitter.

She paused one instant on the threshold of the room, then turned and went softly away.

She had not the key to this deep sorrow, but she knew without words that no words of hers could soften or assuage it, that this could be done by time alone.

Lord Settefeild was passing down the stairs early the next morning when somewhat to his surprise he saw his sister's room door wide open, and Maxton flourishing about evidently in a very bad temper.

He stopped to inquire for Patricia.

"Indeed, my lord, and it won't be her fault if she puts herself into her grave one of these days, a-rushing out on a cold raw morning like this, with no more thought of her chest and lungs than she have of this bedstead. I've spoken

pretty straight to her, my lord, but she wouldn't be said no how!"

"Where, has she gone—to mass?" the Earl asked, for the Settefeilds were one of the oldest Catholic families in England.

"Not to mass this morning, my lord. Ah! I've some rare frights about that there going to early mass, I have. No, its because Mrs. Smithson she sent up word to my lady to say as how that young man, as my lady's interested in, my lord, was that bad he couldn't possibly live through the day, and he'd been asking agin and agin to see my lady, and didn't seem like as though he could die till he had done so. And you know my lady, she got up immediate, and for all I could argue or say, she would go. She's there now, my lord, and I know it won't do her no good!"

Lord Settefeild's dark handsome face settled into a heavy frown.

He was puzzled, and a little hurt too.

His wife's few words about Patricia's great interest in this young man returned to him now and seemed to sting him.

The feeling passed in a moment, of course, for he knew Patricia so well, and he was only too sure she had a good motive for all she did. Nevertheless he was not quite pleased she should have gone out in this hurried early manner, it was a little derogatory to her dignity, he said. There should be moderation in all things, even in charity. As he moved on he looked back, and told Maxton that he would walk to Smithson's cottage and bring Lady Patricia back.

"She is not strong enough for this sort of thing!" he said emphatically; "and then," he added to himself, "Pat is so kind-hearted, people impose on her. I must tell her she cannot be dragged about in this sort of way, it is neither wise nor possible."

His anger did not last long.

"Dear little Pat," he said to himself as he strode swiftly through the grounds to the head-keeper's house. "What a heart of gold she has despite all!"

(To be continued.)



MRS. VASPER PRECEDED US INTO THE BARONS' HALL.

THE SECRETS AND SHADOWS OF CASTLEGRANGE.

—30:—

CHAPTER XXII.

It so happened that Bertie Wilford—who, by the way, with all his past fair promises, was by no means so regular a correspondent as Mr. Tressilian—during this the last half-year of our life in Madame's school, was also abroad; in Germany. He had wisely taken his friend Mr. Aragon's advice and gone up to study at the art schools in London.

He had worked hard there, and made much real progress, and ere long had succeeded in winning a travelling scholarship which enabled him to go and live at Munich for three years. He had also studied diligently in Dresden and in Florence, and had already been an exhibitor at the Royal Academy—small pictures in big frames, it is true, but they had not been "skied;" had fortunately attracted the notice of the critics, and had moreover been sold, fetching good prices, before the end of the season.

It was from Bertie that I also learned one day that success, the brightest possible success, had at last crowned the once embittered life of his dear friend and whilom master, George Aragon. Mr. Aragon nowadays was one of the most successful and sought after painters of his time; and need I say that over this wonderful turn in his friend's luck no one rejoiced more sincerely and exceedingly than did Bertie Wilford himself?

It appeared that shortly after our departure from Thorpe this wonderful thing had happened for Mr. Aragon.

The dealer in Bond-street, in whose shop windows the best work of the neglected artist had for years past been exhibited to the cold glances of an undiscerning world, had one day informed him that a patron of the right sort had at last come forward, and fully recognised his, George Aragon's, talent—an apparently wealthy

connoisseur, who for some unexplained reason desired that his name and whereabouts might be kept from the painter's knowledge.

Without so much as inquiring the modest figure at which the good work he fancied was valued by the doer of it himself, this eccentric purchaser had promptly offered a thousand pounds for a couple of pictures painted by George Aragon; giving at the same time an order for two or three larger ones from the same hand, touching which new pictures the artist was free to choose his own subjects, and which were to be sent when completed to the address that was known to the dealer—the name and the address that the dealer notwithstanding, acting according to instructions, flatly declined to reveal.

For this fresh work Mr. Aragon's mysterious art-patron was willing to pay him at the rate of a thousand pounds a-piece for each picture, or more even should the artist himself hold his work to be worth it.

Of course the friendly picture-seller took his own handsome commission in this singular, unexpected business; but, perhaps, in the circumstances, Mr. Aragon did not mind that now.

Verily his star was in the ascendant at last—for everything, we are told, comes in the end to him who knows how to wait for it patiently. But oh! the weariness, the heart-sickness of that waiting time.

Somewhat or other, after this sudden stroke of luck, everything went well with the poor painter, bringing swift prosperity. His fame, indeed, spread as rapidly as a dry furze fire on a windy hill-side—people said that he was a genius at last!

Nothing succeeds like success—very stale but very true! He exhibited at the Royal Academy in London; at the Salon in Paris; he was asked to contribute to the Grosvenor Gallery; and at all three alike his work now attracted crowds, created a furore—yes, the British public, who in all matters of art and intellect are led like sheep, oftentimes the silliest of sheep, said that George Aragon was a genius at last!

"You should just see, my dear Hebe, that Queen Anne house of his at Chelsea," wrote Bertie, in one of his hurried few-and-far-between letters. "Of course he cut Shoreham, you know, long ago! It is just perfect, I can tell you. Aragon's taste in art matters, to my thinking, always was unapproachable—in the furnishing and the decorating line, and all that sort of thing, he comes out strong, by Jove! Everybody runs after him, everybody wants to know him. He's making pots of money, and refusing commissions by the dozen. You'd hardly believe it, but the funniest thing is he doesn't seem to care a rap about it all, now that he has won it. Fact. He takes everything as coolly and as naturally as a duck in a pond—you know what I mean! I was dining alone with him only the other evening, and I couldn't help remarking openly upon the calm unruffled way in which he accepts the extraordinary good fortune which has fallen to his lot.

"The gods have relented, old man, you see," said I. "I always knew they would in the end."

"Aragon, as you are aware, Hebe, is not a bit what you may call a demonstrative fellow—far from it. But he put his hand heavily upon my shoulder, and looking into them then, I saw that his eyes were full of tears. 'Bertie, dear,' he said quite simply, 'all this should have happened years back; in the days gone by. Heaven knows it would have made me happy enough then. Now—well, it has come too late; that's all.' Rum, Hebe, wasn't it!"

This was in one of Bertie's earlier and more boyish letters; letters that were in every line of them so like himself that I used sometimes to lie back in my chair and shut my eyes after reading them, and so in fancy call up the image of the writer as I used to know him in Thorpe. It was by no means a difficult thing to do, with Bertie's letter in my hand, and Bertie's words still fresh in my ear.

By-and-by, when my seventeenth birthday was past and my eighteenth drawing near, came

rather unexpectedly the news of Julian Tressilian's return to England and his arrival at Castlegrange.

Shortly afterwards followed the intelligence from Madame that my school-life in Spa Gardens was to terminate with the approaching Easter recess, which then indeed was close upon us.

Was I glad or sorry? I think I was both at once. The thought of my complete emancipation and of my home-going to Castlegrange of course afforded me infinite delight; on the other hand, the prospect of saying farewell to my good friend Madame Adolphe caused me sincere regret. I was "grown-up" now—I was a child no longer. Upon the threshold of womanhood I found myself almost before I had realised the fact—

"Standing, with reluctant feet,
Where the brook and river meet."

That

"Life hath quicksands—life hath snares!
Care and age come unawares!"

is unremembered when one is young.

Almost simultaneously with this bright good news affecting myself arrived startling, sorrowful intelligence for Felicia Luck. Poor Felicia! Things went wry with her with a vengeance!

The Honourable Miss Graham had had some sort of stroke or fit, and died suddenly, wrote Aunt Tabby's man of business, and to the indignant surprise of everybody belonging to her, she had, it seemed, left no will behind her!

Her watchful, greedy relatives who had leeches her, truckled to her, and detested her throughout her life, were all of them disappointed—save one. That one exception was Miss Tabitha's nearest male kinsman, the heir-at-law, to whom everything must necessarily go; a reprobate young nephew who was away in Australia, and whom the old lady had never seen. Oh, it was terrible; it was indeed too bad! This miserable young man would pretty quickly make ducks and drakes with Aunt Tabby's money, as he had made ducks and drakes with his own and other people's before they got him out of the country, be-moaned all these angry, disappointed relations!

So they vented their spleen and their disgust on Felicia Luck, who had gone home to the house in South Kensington for two or three days. She sent me no tidings whilst there; but immediately after the funeral she returned, dressed in deep mourning, to Madame Adolphe.

Never before had I seen Felicia so quiet, so wan—subdued—crushed. And when we were alone together, she fell straightway into my arms, and, with her face hidden upon my shoulder, cried there for a little while as if her heart must really break.

"Tell me, darling, all about it," I said, comforting her as well as I could.

"My spirit is broken, Hebe," she said—"quite broken. I feel as if I never could hold up my head and be happy again!"

With a long, hard, quivering breath which seemed verily to rend her bosom as I held her, she presently began to dry her eyes, saying vehemently,—

"Oh, they have been so hard with me, so unkind, so cruel! They hate me, you know; and I would hate them if they were worth the hating; but they are not—the mean, cowardly wretches! Oh, my dear, good, generous, merry old friend, never in this world shall I look upon your like again!"

And then she grew calmer, and told me how infamously Aunt Tabby's relations had treated her.

They had called her names, shameful names, she said, which had made the blood in every vein tingle and boil with indignation, flinging in her face, as it were, the unhappy secret of her parentage.

Of course they would not have dared so to insult her, had poor frolicsome old Miss Tabby been alive to champion her founding; but Aunt Tabby was upstairs, lying cold and still for ever, securely nailed down in her coffin; and that made all the difference!

They preemptorily and absolutely declined to acknowledge that hapless Felicia at any time in the past could have had the slightest claim what-

ever upon the regard and consideration of their kinswoman, the late Honourable Tabitha Graham.

She—Felicia—had lived in idleness and luxury long enough; it was time now that she, a nameless gutter brat, should go out into the world and earn the bread she ate.

Their late relative was rather more than a little mad, as all the world knew, or never would a street-beggar, the spawn of the slums, have been set upon horseback in so highly ridiculous a manner!

They had even swooped down upon the house in The Boltons before Felicia herself could get thither from Bath, and had seized everything they could lay their hands on that belonged to Miss Graham's adopted niece.

She might have her clothes, her own clothes, they said; nothing else in the house belonged to her or ever had been hers.

"And oh," Felicia sobbed, "I had such lovely things of my own there—lots of them, Hebe! Rings, lockets, brooches, bracelets—things of course that a school-girl could not wear. Dear old Aunt Tabby was always giving me something beautiful in the way of costly jewellery that I might wear when I was older, she said."

"Now, we'll buy this, shall we, eh? and put it snugly by for you," she used to say, whenever we saw anything prettier than common in a jeweller's window; "it will help to make you fair and dazzling to the eye when you come out and make your bow to society, my ugly little chickabiddy, under my wing by-and-by; and then—who knows!—perhaps we shall be able to catch a rich husband for you in the end. But you'll want a lot of smartening up for it, I'm afraid." And now I have lost not only my good Aunt Tabby, but almost everything she ever gave me. Oh, the wretches! Of course I cannot, I dare not resent this vile conduct—I can claim nothing, you see, I am powerless! If I were to make an outcry over the iniquitous business, Madame Adolphe would inevitably discover the whole truth about me; and that, for obvious reasons, I would not have happen for the world. No! hard as it is, I must bear their taunts and their injustice with the best grace I can; though I confess that it makes me feel 'real mad' when I think of it all! This, Hebe dearest, is the sore penalty of being nobody's child—it has come home to me, you see, it has found me out at last!"

"Nevertheless, it is consolatory to reflect that those horrid, hateful, unkind people have been so completely disappointed in their expectations, Felicia," I told her soothingly.

"I don't know," Felicia answered ruefully; "I am not so sure, Hebe. Doubtless if they had not been so frightfully 'sold'—that's the real word for it—they would not have behaved so ill to me."

Luckily she had with her at school her gold watch and chain—Miss Graham's last New Year gift—and one poor little valueless ornament besides, which she always kept with her whithersoever she went, and never in any circumstances parted with. She seldom wore it, though; it rarely saw the light. The trinket was too great a treasure in the eyes of its owner—was guarded too jealously always.

Yet it was only a limp slender bracelet of delicately woven dark hair, with a silver pendant at the snap of it fashioned in the shape of a tiny dove, with outspread wings, and an olive leaf in its beak.

It was clasped round the wee white frozen arm of Felicia Luck when they found her, a fortnight-old bundle of puling humanity, eighteen years ago, nearly dead of cold, upon the doorsteps of Miss Graham's house; and it was the dominant hope of Felicia's life, nay, her fixed belief, that the slender bracelet of soft dark plaited hair would one day or other, either sooner or later, lead to the unravelling of the true history of her birth.

"Poor little dove," said she mournfully, fingering the tiny silver pendant later on, "you I have still left, thank Heaven, if all else is gone! I wouldn't lose you, little bird, for the whole world!"

In money, at the time of Miss Graham's death, Felicia had in a savings' bank something perhaps between fifty and sixty pounds; and

already had she been obliged to draw upon this small nest egg, which now represented the sum total of her worldly capital, in order to buy her mourning—otherwise she would have gone without.

As for Madame, prudent Madame Adolphe was on the right and safe side with regard to the catastrophe which had overtaken Felicia Luck; for it was with her a strict rule which she relaxed in no one's favour, that she—Madame—should with each particular pupil, from the date of that pupil's first arrival, receive her half-yearly payments in advance.

So Madame Adolphe, at all events, had nothing to apprehend on the score of the sudden demise of the Honourable Miss Graham.

For myself, I wrote off directly to Mr. Tressilian and told him guardedly how things were just then with my dear and only girl-friend in the school at Spa Gardens. Might I, I asked, bring her home with me for a while to Castlegrange? For the present she had no shelter anywhere, unless she stayed on until midsummer with Madame at Ba'h.

And Mr. Tressilian, as I knew he would, answered my letter by return post; in his letter to me enclosing a brief but most cordial note of invitation for Felicia herself, which for a space, at any rate, had revived in her all her old spirit and vivacity.

"Bring with you your friend Miss Luck by all means," Julian said, "since you are so fond of her, Hebe. Let Castlegrange be her home, if she cares to make it so, until she is able or disposed to look about her and devise some definite scheme for the future. It will be well, too, for you to have here a companion of your own age."

And that was how it came to pass, when the Easter holidays arrived, that Felicia Luck and I went home to Castlegrange together.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I AND Felicia were the last to take leave of Madame Adolphe at that Easter vacation-time. All the other girls had already departed when we drove with her in a fly to the Bath station.

"I shall miss you, Hebe," she said to me in her brisk straightforward way. "Hitherto, for the last six years, you have always spent these holidays with me, you know. And now that you are not coming back to me any more—oh, well, my dear, I am afraid that altogether I shall miss you very much indeed!"

This was said with such evident sincerity that the regretful tears rose suddenly in my eyes.

"It is very kind of you to say so, Madame," I managed to smile.

However, it was quite understood between us that, although school discipline for me was now over and done with, we were not, all the same, to lose sight of each other in the years to come; on the contrary, whenever occasion permitted our doing so, we were to meet and renew the pleasant friendship of the past.

To Felicia Madame hinted delicately that she was of course aware that the prospect now before her—Felicia Luck—could not possibly be so bright and hopeful as it had been in Miss Graham's lifetime; therefore, if at any future time her old pupil should find herself in need of a temporary home, assistance, or advice, she was at once, in any strait or difficulty that might come upon her, to remember Spa Gardens and Madame Adolphe.

Then Madame kissed and blessed us both in a very real and heart-felt way; and the moving train steamed out of the Bath station.

Easter in that year, I remember, fell singularly late. The past winter had been brief and mild; an early glad spring in consequence, with gentle wooing winds and soft refreshing rains, had burst forth responsively and prodigally.

Wall-flowers and cabbage-roses, lilies and scented stocks, southernwood, home poppies, and peonies, were flourishing sturdily by the end of April; and early in May it seemed indeed that summer in all her glory was already come.

Felicia's temperament was essentially an impressionable and elastic one—mercurial to a

degree; and I think that the sweet spring weather, with its soft winds and cheering sunshine, had much to do with the helping her to forget the heavy loss she had sustained and the bitter humiliation which had followed it.

At the time we were journeying homeward to Castlegrange she was looking pale, it is true, and a little worn; but in spirit now, if not yet in appearance, she was almost her attractive gay old self again.

The carriage and a luggage-cart met us at Waybridge; with the former were fat ruddy old Blake the coachman and his tall long-skirted companion of the box, with their solemn countenances and their sleek powdered heads—but there was no Julian.

I felt intensely disappointed that he had not come to meet us; because in the train I had told Felicia Luck, told her confidently, that Mr. Tressillian was certain to be waiting for us at the station.

However he was not; and Felicia and I had the fine roomy carriage to ourselves.

It was about sunset time when we turned in at the great iron gates of the forest lodge; and bars of flamingo-red showed vividly here and there amid the dark boles of the winding avenue trees.

When the avenue narrowed and we descended the wooded slope, passed under the monastic ivied archway, and rattled into the grassy courtyard, Felicia, unable any longer to restrain her curiosity, put her head out of the carriage window. She drew a deep breath of appreciation and delight.

"Oh, Hebe," cried she, "you have not exaggerated one whit!—your description and your praises have, if anything, fallen short of the merits of the actuality! Oh, what a darling grand old place!—it looks like a castle in a fairy story, the abode of a wizard or an enchanted prince!" declared Felicia in her extravagant way.

"Yes—I love it," I answered fervently, but somewhat irrelevantly; for I was thinking of other things just then. I was wondering, perhaps rather nervously, how Mr. Tressillian would meet me and greet me after the six years of separation which were now gone by. Would he think me improved at all? . . . much altered? . . . should I, I thought sadly, now that I was grown up, and coiled up my red-gold hair, and wore long gowns, remind him, not without pain, of Doreen my mother, as I had recalled to him her image when I was a child? . . .

The carriage stopped; but it was not, even now, my kinsman Julian who was advancing through the oak vestibule to welcome us upon the threshold of Castlegrange; but, to my astonishment—Mrs. Vasper; Mrs. Vasper, already dressed for dinner, in her rusty straight black-satin gown—could it be the same limp black-satin garment of six years ago!—and with the broad flat bands of dust-coloured hair as of yore covering her ears and the sides of her narrow head.

On recognising me, she started visibly; but in that still, emotionless manner of hers there was yet perceptible just a shade of what in Mrs. Vasper served for cordiality; and she would no longer, I knew, attempt to over-rule, snub, or terrify me, should my will at any time in the future clash with hers.

No—that time of flint and steel was gone by; for she discerned and tacitly acknowledged that I was a child no longer.

"Indeed I hardly should have known you—you are so—so grown," Mrs. Vasper said. "It is difficult to believe that you are really little Hebe Fairburn! And this, I presume," she murmured, "is your friend Miss Luck! How do you do, Miss Luck! I hope that you are well."

And Mrs. Vasper, with her lean arms folded at her waist, curtsied to Felicia in a slow, stiff, old-fashioned manner which set the humorous gleam in Felicia's eyes dancing and flickering like sunlight on a dusky watercourse, and the corners of her merry dimpled mouth twitching unmanageably. But fortunately at the moment Mrs. Vasper's eyes were cast down; her drab eyelids fluttering in the way I remembered so well.

She preceded us into the barons' hall—in the centre of which, when she found herself there, Felicia gazed around her in silent rapture, then

clasped her hands and cried out: "Oh, what a noble old place!"—explaining that Mr. Tressillian was, or had been, away at one of the more distant farms in company with Mr. Stone the steward; but he had said that he should appear at dinner.

It was odd, I was thinking with a fresh sense of pain and disappointment, that Julian should elect to be away from Castlegrange just at the very hour of my coming home!

In a snug corner of the barons' hall, sheltered by a group of palms and a tapestry screen, there was set a square ebony tea-table, with a small silver urn upon it steaming hospitably. Standing near to it with our things on, Felicia and I each accepted gratefully a cup of tea from Mrs. Vasper; and then were ready to go upstairs.

It was my old friend and waiting-maid Selina Ann who by-and-by appeared, looking noticeably stouter and rosier even than when I saw her last, to know whether she should "take the young ladies to their rooms!"

Notwithstanding the presence of Mrs. Vasper, I rushed at Selina Ann and shook her by both hands.

"What, don't you know me, Selina Ann!" I cried earnestly.

"Yes; I think I should have known you anywhere, Miss Hebe, though 'tis true you are very much altered—and—and welcome home to Castlegrange, miss, if you please," said Selina Ann respectfully.

She now led the way up a branch of the wide double stairway to the gallery above; and presently we found ourselves in the west passages of the solid, straggling old mansion, where the windows were all aflame and blinking in the radiance of the setting sun.

This portion of the house was comparatively unfamiliar to me; for we had come by quite another way than that which I knew from experience took one to my old room. It seemed, then, that I was not to occupy that old room again; and I inquired of Selina Ann whether this were indeed so!

As I spoke, she opened a door and disclosed a suite of rooms which I could not remember ever having seen before. They were large and lofty; newly decorated; luxuriously and completely furnished—the end one of all being a charming bright boudoir or sitting-room built in the western tower.

It was octagonal in shape, looked out over the sweet old pleasure known as Dame Lucy's garden, and was replete with every comfort and delight; by no means the least of which was a brand-new Erard piano.

Our luggage had already been placed in our respective dressing-rooms.

Felicia, uttering little spasmodic, inarticulate cries of admiration, flew hither and thither, from one room to another, inspecting everything, praising everything, in wildly extravagant terms; whilst Selina Ann was explaining, in her sober way, that Mr. Tressillian had given orders that these rooms on the west side of the mansion should be prepared for our joint accommodation because they all opened one into the other, and he had taken it for granted that Miss Fairburn and Miss Luck would prefer to be together, near to each other, as much as possible, at night as well as during the day.

"And are you to be my maid again?" I asked hopefully of Selina Ann.

"That, miss, if you please," replied she modestly. "Mr. Tressillian himself and Mrs. Bell said must rest entirely with you—it was to be just as you might wish. They both seemed to fancy, however, that you would not think me either clever enough or smart enough for you now."

I quickly reassured Selina Ann upon the point; and she, much pleased, forthwith set about unpacking our trunks and shaking out the gowns we were to wear at dinner. She was one of those quietly handy people who can accomplish a great deal in a very short while, without any apparent effort, and without any bustle or noise in the operation. In reality, Selina Ann was invaluable as an abigail; although some folk perhaps, judging solely from her appearance, would scarcely have believed it possible.

We were soon ready; for we knew that dinner must be waiting only for us—Mrs. Vasper had hinted as much before we came upstairs; I in a simple white merino, with white and primrose ribbons, and Felicia in her best black frock which had some good crape upon it, and with, for a wonder, the precious hair bracelet with its diminutive silver pendant encircling her left wrist.

Other surprises were in store for us when we descended to the barons' hall. Willis, the young footman whom I had seen—and now remembered—six years ago, was crossing it; and on recognising Felicia and me, he promptly opened the door of what—and this, by the way, astonished me very much indeed—of what I knew was the great drawing-room, or the state drawing-room, as the Castlegrange servants were accustomed to call the grand old room.

And, as I had told her coming downstairs, I had been about to conduct Felicia straightway to the oriel parlour!

It was in truth a very magnificent apartment, this great drawing-room at Castlegrange, and certainly would not have been out of place in a royal palace; howbeit, to my own moderate taste, it was a great deal too large and lofty and grand to be comfortable. But that, I suppose, was because formerly at Castlegrange I had been used every day to the much narrower dimensions of the cosy oriel parlour.

Julian and Mrs. Vasper were there together; looking expectantly towards the door as we entered.

How we met again, my kinsman and I, after the past six years which had changed me from a child into a woman, it is impossible to say now.

For my self-possession had forsaken me, suddenly and unaccountably, and the embarrassment which subtly overwhelmed me all at once was indeed painful in the extreme.

In circumstances so untoward it was only natural that I should introduce Felicia to Mr. Tressillian awkwardly enough; but she, at any rate, retained her wits and made herself speedily at home with him.

I was dimly conscious that Julian was saying kind and hospitable things to Felicia and me, asking after Madame Adolphe and her school in Spa Gardens, inquiring about our journey from Bath to Waybridge, and sundry other conventional trivialities intended to smooth over the slight *gaucheries*, if such they might be termed, of our reunion.

Yet I think what troubled me more than anything, and in no mean measure, perhaps, intensified my miserable nervousness and self-consciousness, was the fact of finding myself so much taller than Julian, who, in that great state apartment, and by the side of Felicia and me—albeit in reality we were alike slender in form and decidedly below the middle height of a woman—somehow looked more conspicuously undersized and dwarfish in shape than ever! . . . The tears seemed to rush into and flood my throat to suffocation, and rise, hot and blinding, to my eyes. . . . Oh, I felt so sorry for him! . . . so sorry for his cruel and hopeless affliction! . . .

Willis, or Gregory the butler, or somebody, had appeared in a doorway of the vast room and was announcing that dinner was served.

I then for the first time noticed that Mr. Tressillian was in correct evening dress—he used not to don this stiff regulation attire, I remembered, when we dined long ago in the oriel parlour; and it really seemed now that state and ceremony had in every direction at Castlegrange displaced those pleasant old simple easy ways and customs which prevailed there when I was last beneath my kinsman's roof.

Julian offered his arm courteously to Felicia—she was the greatest stranger of our small party; and I and Mrs. Vasper followed them.

It was obvious, as they moved away together, that Felicia experienced no slight difficulty in adjusting her own steps to those of the little lame man at her side; and I knew as well as if I could look right into the heart of her, that, although outwardly decorous enough, she was all the while keenly alive to the pathetic humour of the situation.

And somehow it made me feel strangely sad and angry in the same minute to know that this should be so with Felicia.

From the great drawing-room we crossed to the great dining-room upon the other side of the barons' hall; where, in the spacious high sombre-panelled place, the oval table laid for four in the centre of it, with its shaded lamps and mildly-shining waxen lights, its gleaming glass and silver and its lovely flowers, looked like some fairy white fertile island set in a sea of surrounding gloom.

Pictures—some of them, I fancied, of far more recent date than others—covered the oak walls; their massive frames flashing out fitfully here and there from amid the soft darkling shadows.

A portion of one of the tinted mullioned windows was pushed open to the outer wall; and the balmy twilight air stole sweetly in from the wide dim flower gardens beyond.

Not until the soup and fish had disappeared did I find myself looking fully and courageously at Julian Tresillian.

Just then ignorant of my scrutiny, he was listening gravely to Felicia's sprightly chatter, yet smiling a little now and then at the happy raciness of the expressions which she so frequently let slip, apparently, however, with perfect unconsciousness.

Mrs. Vasper, in her rusty black-satin robe, sitting there opposite to Julian stilly as a stone woman, was likewise, I could see, listening to Felicia.

But I feared, judging from external signs, that my school-girl friend, in that quarter at all events, was not exactly creating an impression of the most desirable character.

I was still marking wistfully the change in Julian which the past six years had ruthlessly set upon his features, the new lines about those beautiful worn dark eyes of his, the fresh furrows upon his noble white brow, the abundant silvery streaks which now showed themselves in his thick dark hair and in his close short beard—when Mrs. Vasper, bending stealthily towards me, just contrived to lay her lean gray finger-tips upon my sleeve.

I turned to her with a start that was almost a shiver.

"Yes?" I interrogated.

"I am afraid, Hebe," said Mrs. Vasper, in a sort of icy whisper, "that your Miss Luck is volatile and frivolous; and let us charitably hope nothing worse. Hebe, have you chosen wisely, think you? Friendship is a grievous error sometimes. What are her belongings—who are her own people, may I ask—the friends of this Felicia Luck?"

(To be continued.)

ONE fashionable lamp shade in Paris is made with an incrustation of old engravings of the Louis XVI or Empire periods. The shape is what is called *bouillotte*, and it is sometimes made in pleated Florence material, with a small flounce and old braid arranged in a *ruche, bonne femme* style. The large sort of shades attain quite a metre in diameter, and are composed of white lace, lined with muslin. Almost the whole of a petticoat can be used in making one of them. Yellow and green, the colours of the Napoleonic period, are very much in demand. Cambric, with a white ground, printed with a multitude of flowers, is also used.

BELGIUM leads the way in the importance which it accords to dogs. According to a decision issued by the Government, which controls all the railroads of the kingdom, a dog is just as much entitled to a seat in a railway compartment as its owner, providing the latter has purchased a ticket for the animal, and when a compartment made to hold ten persons contains eight human beings and two dogs, the compartment is henceforth to be regarded as full. It is to be hoped, however, that on busy days the dog passenger will be willing to stand and oblige a lady, though to judge from the favour which canine pets appear to enjoy in Belgium it seems more likely that ladies will be requested to give up their seats to dogs.

THE SQUIRE'S SON.

—:—

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE days rolled on.

The guests at the Hall seized eagerly upon all the adjuncts to pleasure, and boated on the lake, arched on the lawns, flirted in the drawing-rooms, gambled in the billiard saloon and amused themselves after their respective tastes to their hearts' content.

Meanwhile their generous host mingled with them but very little.

He, like his guests had separate and private suites of apartments, and to these some days he was entirely confined.

Messengers—some foreign and distinguished by swarthy Italian faces—arrived and departed bearing despatches to and fro—long important-looking despatches—over which the old Italian Count and Reginald Dartmouth bent eagerly and argumentatively for hours together.

Sometimes the lovely Lucille would join their councils, which were then always held in the Count's room, and on those occasions a serene flush of pleasure would light up the captain's acute, sympathetic face, and he always contrived to throw a glamour of romance and an undercurrent of devotion and esteem into the conference.

All was going well; he assured himself of this night after night.

His ambition—and how lofty, how great it was, he alone knew; his love, intense, yet not unmingled with self-interest—both were going well.

But the man's heart? Well, for that he could not answer.

Perhaps he did not put the question, but strove with might and main to forget the past and ignore the dark, terrible dreams that made night awful to him and the lines of care and hidden dread which made the mirror a curse to him each morning.

Yes, outwardly all was going well with the new master of the Hall, but inwardly the demon Dread had already taken possession of his soul, and all else—love, ambition, the thirst for more wealth and greater power—was gradually being absorbed by it.

"It is a good idea, excellent, and one of those few ideas which have blessed you so seldom, my dear Bois."

The speaker was Charlie Anderson.

The person addressed was good-natured, stupid Bois Bolton—a baronet of sporting proclivities and stable tastes.

He—Sir Bois—had just proposed, in answer to some one's declaration that there was no programme for the day, that an impromptu steeplechase should be got up, and that the visitors who had their own horses with them should ride them.

"A very good idea," repeated Sir Charles, crossing his legs and looking upon the group seated round the garden seat upon which he lay extended. "What do you say, ladies? Will the steeplechase suit you? Ah, here comes Dartmouth, I'll ask him if it can be managed."

Reginald Dartmouth coming across the lawn with a smile of greeting upon his placid face replied, promptly, after shaking hands all round, "Steeplechase! Oh, yes, nothing easier. There is a course round the estate formed by nature, brook and all complete. But about the horses and the riders?"

"Oh, that's easy enough," said Sir Charles, rising and shaking himself. "Foxley must have the management of it; he is an old master of foxhounds, you know, and an authority. There's Bois will steer his old hunter, Willie Taunton has his own, and will be only too glad. And you, Dartmouth, will you take a run?"

"Y—es," said Reginald Dartmouth. "I'm rather heavy for that sort of thing, but—"

And he glanced at the Countess as if he would glean her wishes from her face, then seeing a smile of interest added—

"Well, yes: I'll ride the chestnut."

"And—that's all I think, excepting myself,"

said Sir Charles. "Of course I shall ride—and back myself to win too, ladies. Countess, will you wager me a dozen of Dent's best—my size is seven-three-quarters—that I don't win? Ah, by the way, we haven't fixed the prize!"

"The prize!" replied the Countess, with a smile. "A silver cup—no, see, let this be the prize."

And with simple modesty she drew a ring of black pearls from her finger and held it up with a light laugh.

Reginald Dartmouth's face flushed and his eyes glistened.

"Ah! Countess," said Sir Charles with a deep sigh, "I pity the poor horses now. Who of us will have pity on his beast when running for such a prize?"

"Come, you have not accepted Sir Charles's wager," murmured Reginald Dartmouth, bending over Lucille.

"Oh, then, I do," she said. "A box of gloves, Sir Charles; and pray what am I to have if I win?"

"A dozen boxes, Countess, and my life if it be of any service to you," responded the baronet, gallantly.

Reginald Dartmouth after talking over a few of the preliminaries of the steeplechase, begged the Countess to give him some advice as to the placing of some ferneries upon the terrace, and bore her off for their inspection.

As soon as they were out of earshot he said, bending over her, and in that tone of deep respect and devotion which he always adopted when he addressed her—

"Will you let me look at the ring for which we are to ride, Countess?"

"Certainly," she said, glancing up at him with a slight look of interrogation, and slipping the precious trifle from her long, tapering finger.

He took the ring and looked at it, then held it between his finger and thumb, and turned his eyes upon her with an almost mournful gaze.

"It seems too precious a thing to be set up as a prize for a steeplechase—a mere chance. Men have died—would die—for less than this."

She flushed slightly, but her calm, thoughtful face resumed its self-possession in an instant, and she held out her hand for the ring.

"Men risk their lives for very little then, captain. This trifle is not worth a thought, and I would not have offered it but that I heard you praise it the other evening."

"Ay," he said, eagerly, "I praised it and longed for it; you would not give it me; I dared not ask it. Can I—dare I hope that you have permitted me to win it?"

She turned away her head and a half-cloud settled or rather drifted over her fair brow.

"It is his who wins it," she said. "I meant it only for him."

His face flushed and then grew stern with resolution.

"'Tis mine already," he murmured, fervently. "I must—I will win."

Before he could reply—even if she had intended to do so—the Count came down the steps towards which they were approaching, and, thrusting his arm through Reginald Dartmouth's with an elated look, said,—

"Welcome me, Dartmouth, I bring good tidings."

Reginald Dartmouth turned eagerly, the countess lifted her eyes eagerly too.

"The two corvettes we dispatched—I should rather say with all gratitude, you, my dear Dartmouth, despatched—"

"No matter," burst in Reginald Dartmouth, with simulated earnestness,—

"Have succeeded in getting an interview with Gabrielli and—hist!—some one is approaching. Come to my room, Lucille, bring me the plan you drew out yesterday."

Almost dragging them in his excitement and delight, the old Italian led the way to his room where they could discuss the news in security.

Meanwhile the group of pleasure-hunters, who had driven the Count to his apartments, set to work preparing for the steeplechase with an arduous red-hot and invincible.

An obstacle had been hinted at by some one in the shape of the jackets, but Miss Goldbags court-

ageously suggested the feasibility of the ladies themselves setting to work and making the silken tunics, and, fired with the ambition of proving themselves able needlewomen, the whole of them trooped off to purchase the required silks and set to work.

Then Charlie Anderson and Bois were deputed to look over the ground and make out a course. With an ardour that only matched the ladies' they mounted and galloped off to survey, soon returning like wet blankets, to announce that the race could not possibly be run till the morrow as the hedges were not high enough nor the brook wide enough to suit such hard riders as Bois Bolton and Reginald Dartmouth, to say nothing of Sir Charles—the hardest of them all.

The delay only added a zest to the affair, and all agreed to spend the day in preparing the jackets and the course in such a style that the steeplechase should be in completeness and detail in keeping with the magnificence from which it sprang.

The course was marked out by Sir Charles and Bois, overseered by Mr. Foxley—an old M.F.H., and perfect authority in such matters—and a grand stand, a miniature of the Ascot one, had been hurriedly built up by a number of the villagers told off and directed by Sir Bois.

The morrow broke brilliantly, the sun glittering upon the gaily decorated stand and the waving flags at the starting-post as if it, with all the rest of Dale, had determined to see and enjoy the race.

The start was set for two o'clock, but long before that hour the space graciously set apart for the villagers was thronged with the farm labourers and tradesmen.

The tenant farmers had received an invitation, which included a dinner in the largest marquess as well as the race.

At half past one Mr. Foxley, followed by a crowd of grooms and stable helps, rode round to clear the course and see the hurdles were properly placed.

At two the stand was filled, and looked for all the world like one of the flower-beds magnified and transplanted from the terrace gardens.

The duchess, affable and not quite so sleepy as usual, was placed in the post of honour, and deigned to glance over the list of riders with pleasant interest.

The Countess sat between the Count and Reginald Dartmouth's aunt, who was as perfect a nonentity as usual in dove-coloured silk.

At half past two the bell rang, and, headed by Mr. Foxley, who looked the very picture of a starter in his close-fitting, fawn-coloured trousers and riding-coat—the riders trotted into the enclosure, and rode past the stand.

They were all of them handsome men, with the exception of Sir Bois, who, however, made up in muscle and superiority of form the grace he lacked in features, and all looked brilliant and pleasing in their gaily coloured jackets.

The jockeys, patting the silky coats of their horses, cantered round, greeted with many a wreathed smile; but Reginald Dartmouth alone stopped at the stand, and he checked his horse as it went past as if struck by a sudden impulse.

"Can your grace see the course?" he asked, addressing the duchess, as in duty bound, with a grave uplifting of his dainty cap.

"Oh, admirably, thank you, captain. What a pretty sight! Really you gentlemen should hunt in silk instead of scarlet!"

Reginald Dartmouth acknowledged the compliment with a profound bow, then, turning towards the Countess, said, in an undertone, too low to reach the Count:

"Have I your good wishes, Countess?"

She laughed her low, sweet laugh as she answered:

"You all have—my wishes will go with the ring."

He inclined his head with an unsatisfied look.

"May fate grant it come to me then," he said, in the same low tone. "Countess, will you give me that rose in your hand as a charm? It would be impossible to lose with that at one's breast."

She coloured faintly, but with a moment's hesitation held it out to him.

"Were your compliment as truthful as it is

flattering, I think it would scarcely be fair to grant your request," captain, but—here's the flower."

He took it eagerly, and as he placed it carefully within the breast of his jacket, where it shone white and snow-like against the richly coloured silk, shot a glance of deep meaning at the Count, who, though unable to hear the conversation, watched the actions of the speakers with an anxious acuteness.

At that moment the bell rang out, and Reginald, turning, saw that he was delaying the start, and that every eye was fixed impatiently upon him.

With cool self-possession he raised his cap, and, turning the chestnut, cantered along to the post.

In a few minutes the horses were in line, then, while a sudden silence broke the hum and buzz of voices, the word was given, and like arrows from the bows they were gone.

A cheer of satisfaction and delight arose from the spectators within the enclosure, the ladies on the grand stand waved their handkerchiefs—the gentlemen prepared their glasses, and grew keen eyed and watchful.

"Sir Bois leads!" exclaimed the duchess, as Sir Bois pushed to the front, and with a keen eye for the first hurdle kept a strong hand upon the rather hard mouth of his roan.

But they were all pretty well together at the rise, and the gentlemen in the stand prophesied a close race, as the whole five bore on to the second leap well in line.

At the hurdle, however, the marquis's horse, a straggling bay, jumped short, and with a roar of excitement from the lookers on he came to the ground.

But it was not a serious fall, and in the twinkling of an eye the bay was on his feet again, and the marquis with a heightened colour pressing on in the rear.

Reginald Dartmouth had kept his position next Sir Bois with quiet ease, until the fourth leap—an embankment of furze and hawthorn.

Here, however, lifting the chestnut over in good style, he put on a little extra pressure and got to the front, with Sir Charles behind and Sir Bois thundering close at his side.

Now the brook came in sight, and the excitement rose like yeast.

"Now then," shouted one old farmer above the cheering and hurrahing. "Put the old 'un well to it, cap'n."

And Reginald, with a half-smile, lifted the good old horse at the broad span of water.

Before he could clear it, however, Sir Charles passed him, and, amidst a hail of cheering and shouting, leapt the silver stream, and, pulling himself together, shot on ahead.

Reginald followed after, Sir Bois thundering in the rear and sending a splash of water into the marquis's face, who, after a most gallant effort, landed—or rather floundered full plash into the water and crawled out, horse and rider, soaked and dripping.

The excitement, however, was too great to notice him; he was out of the race, and the whole interest centred in the four remaining, Lord Taunton having succeeded with a touch of his spurs in sending his horse on to keep company with the rest.

Now, almost abreast, they rise and clear the hurdle, then spin round the piece of turf on their way home.

Whish! Clack! Smash! At the first barrier Sir Bois comes a cropper, and the gallant horse falls lengthways.

Lord Taunton, with a brief muttered curse, tries to take him in the leap, but falls short and tumbles within a yard.

Reginald Dartmouth and Sir Charles have it all their own way now, and, amidst a death-like silence bred of the most intense excitement, urge their panting cattle towards the brook.

"Ten to one on Sir Charles! Fifteen to one on the captain!" shouts the crowd.

"Here they come! Oh, the brook—the brook!" breathe the ladies, rising in the stand, as by one impulse and waving their handkerchiefs.

With stern, set face Reginald Dartmouth bears down upon the calm line of water.

Sir Charles, with the old careless smile upon his handsome, haggard, world-worn face, follows half a yard after.

"The brook, the brook—that'll do it!" murmur the crowd.

Then they raise their voices with one loud cry as Reginald Dartmouth raising his eyes towards the stand, with a flash like lightning, charges at the water, and, lifting the chestnut, clears it by an inch.

Sir Charles takes it more cautiously, but clears it nevertheless, and then a roar rises.

"Now, now, the last hurdle! Wonderful, wonderful! Sir Charles, two to one. Captain Dartmouth—Hah!"

The roar ceases as if by magic.

The last hurdle has been cleared by the broad-chested chestnut, but the racer had missed it, and as Reginald Dartmouth rides on, winner of the precious ring, Sir Charles is thrown as from a catapult, full upon his golden beard, and lies stretched, still and motionless, upon the green sward.

A shriek cleaves the air, followed by another and yet another—the fence goes down like a piece of cotton, and a crowd, composed of lords and ladies, farmers and labourers, throng round the prostrate form.

"Lift him up carefully—don't move him!" cry different voices, warningly.

But before anyone could do anything a sturdy figure pushed its way through the crowd, and, followed by a stable help, proceeded to lift the unconscious man with gentle care.

Reginald Dartmouth at this moment came forward, and, wiping the perspiration from his forehead, bade them be careful—very careful.

But they took no notice, and going sedately through the crowd, bore the limp form to a carriage that, unnoticed, had stopped on the outskirts of the throng.

Reginald Dartmouth opened his mouth to ask for an explanation, and give some command, but he shut it speechlessly as a lady, dressed in deep mourning, stepped from the carriage and looking very white and determined, said, distinctly:

"Captain Dartmouth, Sir Charles Anderson is my cousin, the Warren is nearer than the Hall."

Then before he could answer she re-entered the carriage, the door was shut with a bang, the faithful old coachman mounted the box and Sir Charles was borne off.

CHAPTER XXXIII

WHILE Captain Dartmouth and some of his friends were risking their necks over hurdles and a widened brook for the amusement of the others a young man was wearily toiling up the hill to Dale.

He was a slim, but well-built young fellow, with an air of good breeding about him that was scarcely borne out by his face, for what could be seen of it was of a dark hue made rather pallid-looking by the huge blue spectacles perched on the nose, while (in direct antagonism) his hair, which to match his complexion should have been black, or at least brown, was of an unmistakable and somewhat brilliant red.

Evidently the young gentleman was no stranger in Dale, for at every turn of the long, dusty road he paused, and, shifting the little wallet he carried on his back to a fresh position, looked curiously round about him.

Sometimes as, for instance, when the new row of cottages by Manor Farm, met his view, he seemed lost in meditation, and nodded once or twice with an approving air.

But as he reached the top of the hill and came within sight of the new Hall, which reared its stately head above the trees like a new and substantial Tower of Babel, he stopped point blank in the road, and, opening his eyes wide behind the blue spectacles, stared with unbounded amazement.

For a few minutes he seemed too astounded to proceed, but, still keeping the spectacles turned upon the new palace, he walked slowly on, and

with an air of puzzled bewilderment gained the new gates, which in all the glory of iron moulding presented a magnificent and imposing barrier to the outside world passing by.

As if unable to take in enough of the sight by a long stand-up gaze, the youth seated himself upon one of the huge stone boulders flanking the gate, and leaning his chin upon his hands let his eyes wander from cellar grating to garret casement, revelling in a long scrutinising gaze.

Presently, while he was still looking, an old farm labourer trudged by.

The youth turned quickly, and in a voice slightly tinged with an accent that might be foreign, but could not have been recognised as belonging to any language in particular, said:

"Good-morning!"

"Good-morning, master!" replied the old man, with apt civility.

And touching his wrinkled forehead he essayed to proceed, but the youth arrested him with:

"Can you tell me what place this is?"

The old man pulled up, and, leaning on his hoe, turned with a significant smile.

"You be a stranger in these parts?"

"Yes," nodded the youth, "quite."

"Ay, ay, so I was thinking," returned the old man. "Well, this be the new Hall."

And he removed his eyes from the youth to gaze at the enormous place with admiring awe.

"The new Hall," repeated the youth. "Humph! Well, it looks new—"

"Ay, it looks new, don't it?" assented the old man, with quiet delight. "So 'ud anybody say, but it bea'n't, not quite, you know. 'Tis only the outside as one may say, on'y coat and clothin'; the bricks and mortar, and t' stones be the same as when it was called t' Dale."

"Oh," said the youth, rather strangely, and with a sudden drop of his face, "so this used to be called the Dale, eh? How long ago now?"

"Two year nigh upon," replied the old man, pleased at the evident interest which the strange wayfarer took in the new Hall, the pride of the county. "Two year nigh upon. Ay"—this with a sigh—"it be more'n two years since t' old Squire died; and if he could come fro' his grave yonder, he'd never know the place."

"I don't think he would," muttered the youth, sorrowfully. "This looks such a very grand place. And pray to whom does it belong?"

"To the cap'n—Captain Dartmouth," replied the old man. "T' Squire left it 'm by will. He be a sojor."

"By will!" repeated the youth. "Did he leave him anything else beside the old house—which he lost so little time in effacing?"

"He left him everything," answered the old labourer, with a certain bitterness in his tone. "Everything—Dale, lands and money and all. Good-day to you, young sir."

And with another touch to the forehead he moved on.

The youth, after another long look at the house beyond the gates, rose likewise, and with averted face, passed into the road.

Before he got fifty paces a sudden shout broke the midday stillness, a shout followed by a mingled roar of excitement, a shout and uproar of a crowd interested to the heart in some spectacle or accident.

The youth turned to listen and saw a carriage coming down the road towards him.

He stepped on one side just in time to escape the horse—just in time, and so narrowly escaping it that his face almost touched the window, through which he saw a lady's face.

The lady saw him and suddenly pulled the check-string.

The coachman pulled up, the window was let down, and the lady, who had a pleasant, mournfully sweet face, said, in a hurried, anxious way:

"Do you belong to the Hall?"

Seemingly much embarrassed by the sudden movement and question, and apparently unconscious of its import, the youth answered at random—

"Yes, madam."

"Then—can you tell me," said the lady, with increased hesitation and eagerness, "if Sir Charles Anderson rides in the race?"

The youth stared for a moment, then, with a shake of the head, said,—

"I am sorry, madam, but I cannot—"

At that moment another shout rose upon the ear, followed by a shower of bravos and hurrahs.

The lady told the coachman to drive on, and, sinking back, left the slim, red-haired youth gazing after her with a strange and peculiar look upon his face.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE morning after the race arrived.

It was nearly noon, but the great palace on the hill was still quiet, and to all appearance wrapped in sleep.

The eventful day had finished up with a ball—at which the numerous and fashionable guests did not omit to mention "poor Sir Charles;" but were seemingly none the less merry and happy for his broken leg or neck; it was a ball more brilliant and successful if possible than the one on the opening night, as it was called, and the merry-makers, who had not retired to their luxurious nests until the small hours, were taking their revenge upon the bright, fresh hours of the summer morning.

But the host was less idle; he had risen at ten, and now sat sipping his chocolate in the morning-room set aside for his own private and special use.

His letters, and these were many, were not suffered to annoy or disturb his first waking moments; they lay on the marqueterie desk in the adjoining apartment, in a goodly heap, from business men and friends.

A knock at the door broke the thread of the captain's thoughts. He set the costly dainty toy of a cup in its equally costly saucer, and composing his face, that always wore a mask even to his servants, said, languidly,—

"Come in."

The door opened and the captain's own man—a discreet, silent, well-oiled piece of machinery, glided in.

"Oh, you are back," said Reginald Dartmouth. "And how is Sir Charles?"

"No better, sir," said the discreet man, with a silent, shadowy sort of voice, devoid of all expression—as such a servant's should be. "No better, sir; indeed I was given to understand a little worse."

The captain frowned.

"Whom did you see?"

"Miss Goodman's maid, sir," replied the man.

"Miss Goodman's maid," repeated the captain, gazing thoughtfully at the cup. "Did you ask to see Miss Goodman?"

"Yes, sir," replied the man. "She sent word to say that she was engaged with Sir Charles, and she would not detain me."

Reginald Dartmouth made a slight gesture with his hands, but not so slight but that the sleek, silent machine saw and noted it.

"Did you see any one else, Vignes?"

"No one, excepting the domestic and—I beg your pardon sir, I had forgotten—and the old lady, Mrs. Lucas."

A hasty expression of annoyance escaped the captain almost before he was aware of it.

"She there too!" he muttered, then added aloud. "Thanks; that will do."

And the discreet machine glided noiselessly out of the room.

Captain Dartmouth rose from his black-and-gold chair with lowered brows and commenced to walk the room.

"Strange! Things work round to annoy me. That shallow-pated fool must break his worthless neck at this inopportune moment and fall into that queer woman's hands. Strange, very strange! but I feel some undefined fear, some shadow of dread in that direction. Bah! undefined indeed! What can happen? what can come out through that old maid! She has one old cat there already—Mrs. Lucas, the old viper who used to rule the roast here. Hem! Did I do wisely to turn her out? Would it not have been better to have pensioned her off and kept her under my own eye! Bah!" he repeated again, with a shrug of the

shoulders. "All is safe—all must be safe. And now for these letters."

And with a smile of cunning that was almost defiant upon his handsome face he strolled into the next room.

While he sat facing his letters, the soft, gentle knock of his valet came at the door again.

"Come in!"

The man entered, and, with hesitation, commenced,—

"I am very sorry to disturb you, sir, but, a young fellow—I am not sure whether he is a gentleman or not—demands to see you. He will take no refusal, and is so obstinate that I have ventured to—"

"What name does he give?" asked the captain, opening his first letter and laying it aside.

"He will give none—none whatever!" replied the machine.

The captain hesitated for a moment.

It was not usual for him to see anonymous applicants.

He made this by some inexplicable reason or impulse an exception.

"I will see him," he said.

The valet vanished, and almost instantly glided in again, stepped aside and allowed a young man to enter.

Captain Dartmouth looked up and saw a dark face, deadened and made expressionless by a huge pair of blue spectacles—such as are worn by persons afflicted with weak or diseased eyes.

These, taken in conjunction with a head of decidedly red hair, and an impassive, inert manner, were not prepossessing.

Reginald frowned slightly, lifted another envelope and tore it open.

"You wished to see me?" he asked, as a commencement.

"I did take that liberty, sir," said the youth, humbly, but with anything but a servile air.

The captain listened for a moment, as if to an echo.

He thought that he recognised the voice—yet scarcely the voice—he had never heard so gruff and unmelodious a one—rather a certain something in the accent of the words.

He put another question, and listened again with idle curiosity.

"It was no liberty that I am at present aware of. Pray why do you wish to see me?"

"I—I have ventured to implore an interview, sir," replied the youth, "to ask your assistance. I will tell my case, sir, in as few words as possible,—"

"I was born in the adjoining village—Crayford—born and bred there, and intended for a farmer, but always since childhood had a hankering for the sea, and at thirteen ran away to the coast."

"I took ship there as ship-master's apprentice and went four voyages. In the third I was wrecked and I fell into the hands of a foreign merchant off the Cape coast, who employed me as clerk and secretary—I implore you to hear me out, sir."

"Being unwell and fearing that the climate would be fatal, I ran away and came to England. I have been living in London for three weeks, searching for employment, and, finding none, at last ventured to tramp down home."

"But having arrived here I find all my family dead, sir, and I have no one to whom I could apply for assistance."

"Stopping at the post office to rest awhile, I heard of you, sir, and of your kindness of heart, and was struck, as it were, all of a sudden with an impulse to find my way to your presence and beg of you some place in the household—as groom, or—or—servant, or boy—some place about your person or your household."

The captain was astounded, but he had been a master of the art of concealment much too long to show it.

"You were born in the next village, do you say? What is your name?"

"Stanfield—John Stanfield, sir," replied the youth.

The captain laid down the letter last glanced at, and fixing his eyes upon the hideous spectacles, said, with unpleasant distinctness,—

"And how pray, am I to prove that your story is true?"

"I only wish, sir, I had proofs to give you."

"Hem," said the captain, eyeing him, and then glancing at his letters. "You were a clerk and secretary, you say; can you speak and write French?"

The youth hesitated a moment.

"Not so fluently as I could wish, but, sir, try me, I implore. I know something of French and Italian, I have learnt of the sailors, and—"

Captain Dartmouth flung him a letter.

"Translate that."

The youth took it up with a hand particularly small and particularly brown, and after hesitating a moment read with a fair accent and tolerably free translation.

"That is passable," said the captain, after a moment's consideration. "Now let me see a specimen of your secretaryship. Answer those two letters. I accept the first, which requests my name as director; I refuse the second."

The youth took up a pen, and, after reading the letters, wrote in a clear, round but jerky hand the answers properly worded and spelt.

Reginald Dartmouth glanced at them, and then, still holding them in his hand, said,—

"Well—well; I am inclined to give you a trial. Will you show me a little gratitude—you ought to be grateful!"

"Oh, I will, sir—I will—I am."

"Good," nodded the captain, lounging to the table. "I will take you into my service as you requested, informing you as I do so that I never forgive any servant and never forget a fault—you understand me? Dishonesty, falsehood, bad faith—say, one slip only—is unpardonable. I never forgive. Stay here. These letters require answering. The purport of their replies I dot down in the corner of each. You will amplify them as in the samples here in my hand and leave them open for my signature. When that is done go into the next room and wait till I send for you."

The youth murmured a respectful assent, took his seat at the desk and commenced his task as Reginald Dartmouth strolled from the room.

The secretary waited until his master's languid footsteps died away in the distance of the huge marble hall, and then with a suddenness that shook the gilt table, started to his feet, snatched off the disfiguring and disguising spectacles, and said, with flashing eyes and voice hushed and intense, but anything but gruff:

"You deep-dyed villain, I will have you in my toils yet!"

There never was so discreet a servant as John Stanfield.

Vignes, the machine-like valet, could not be more noiseless, serpent-like and silent.

The impassive, blue-spectacled secretary was more like a shadow than a human being—nay, more than once when he was seen, by mere chance, by some of the guests gliding noiselessly along to or from some mission of the all-powerful captain, they wondered and jokingly asked if he really were life and substance or shadow and phantom.

He seemed deaf and dumb as well as almost sightless, as he was supposed to be.

He turned his head neither to the right nor left if he was met on staircase or terrace, but was always to be seen, when he was seen at all, with lowered head, impassive, expressionless face, looking straight before him, as if the responsibility of the captain's correspondence, and the captain's secrets perhaps, were weighing down or lifting him up and carrying him far away from the mundane world.

My lady, the Countess, who was observant and quick, one day noticed this shadowy secretary, and, turning to her devoted adorer and slave, Reginald Dartmouth, the shadow's master, said, with that smile which always lit up her face whenever she addressed him,—

"Captain, have you a mute in your service, or is that had a mystery?"

"Mystery!" repeated the captain, in the soft, gentle, love-accented tones in which he always addressed the beautiful Countess. "No mystery, I assure you; he is a very honest and

very good fellow. Rather quiet, perhaps, but it is an advantage to him. He has a great deal to do, and I must in fairness to him say he does it well. But you shall satisfy your curiosity, I will call him. John!"

The youth, who had reached the end of the terrace upon which the Countess and his master were sitting, by the time these words had passed, looked round with a start of attention as the name reached his ears, and with a half-bow came slowly back and stood in front of his master.

"Well, Stanfield, are you taking your usual stroll?" said Captain Dartmouth, with his languid haughtiness, tinged with that indescribable insolence which a cruel, merciless man shows to the unfortunate being in his power.

The secretary glanced up through his dark spectacles at his master's face, and as he answered carried his eyes to the beautiful ones of the Countess.

"Yes, sir," he said, in his husky voice, that seemed stifled and choked in his throat. "Yes, sir, my evening stroll."

"Have you heard, have you seen anyone from the Warren as you passed?" asked Reginald Dartmouth, languidly.

"Yes, sir; Mrs. Lucas," replied the secretary, lifting his eyes as he spoke the name, and noting the shadow of impatience, anger, and irritation that flashed across the captain's face as he heard it.

"And Sir Charles Anderson, how is he?" asked the Countess, awakening from that peculiar dream state of hers, to put the question.

"Better, madame, but still ill," returned the secretary.

Then, after waiting a moment to see if any farther information were wanted, he made his formal, methodical bow and trudged slowly up the terrace.

"Strange young man, very," murmured the Countess, looking after him.

"Yes," drawled Reginald Dartmouth, "but invaluable. He is quick as a needle—and as insignificant."

Meanwhile the strange young man gained his room, and, seating himself in the writing-chair, leaned his elbow on the table and seemed lost in thought.

Thought of a painful and exciting nature seemingly, for after a moment or two he rose and took a turn or two across the room, stopping his short-stepped pacing for a moment to turn the key in the door, murmuring as he recommenced his promenade,—

"Fox—aly, wicked fox! There has been some dark, foul play. I am sure of it—sure of it. Something within me"—and he touched his breast with his little, well-shaped hand—"tells me that Reginald Dartmouth has gained the Dale by some dark deed—some deep, well-executed plot. Day by day the certainty grows, and with it my hate! Hate! Let me think. Yes, hate, and yet there is something mingled with it."

"I want revenge; I thirst for it. I long to avenge Laury's wrongs and the Squire's, too. Poor old man! poor, weak, fiery old man! Ay, once more I am sure that there has been some evil work, and that—that—what? What? Why is the captain so changed? They say it is the responsibility of all this sudden wealth that wrinkles his brow; but I who see him here and watch him when he thinks I have eyes for nothing but the paper before me, see that something greater and deeper than that lies hidden in his heart."

"Why does he shun the Warren? Why does Rebecca deny herself to him? and why does he frown when even Mrs. Lucas's name is mentioned? Poor old lady! She is the connecting link between the old Dale and the new. Simmons is dead, the rest are scattered, but she is here hand in hand with Rebecca, close beside him and an object of his dislike and fear! Yes, fear—for there was alarm as well as hate in the frown that her name brought upon his face."

Then, puzzling over this, joining the links in the chain, the strange young man sank upon the chair and dropped his head upon his hand for a moment.

When he raised his face again there were tear

drops upon his pale cheeks, and the murmur was broken and hushed.

At that moment the handle of the door was tried.

Casting a hasty glance in the mirror opposite him, and composing his flushed and excited face into its usual expression of stolid indifference, the secretary trudged to the door and unlocked it.

Reginald Dartmouth entered and casting a suspicious glance at the youth, said sharply,—

"Why did you lock the door?"

"I did not wish to be disturbed, sir," replied the secretary, hastily glancing at the desk. "There are a great many letters to write before the post, and Vignes comes in occasionally with questions."

Reginald Dartmouth after another piercing look was satisfied by the blank face, and dropped himself into a chair while the youth returned slowly to the table without so much as a glance at his master's face, and with a preoccupied air.

Reginald Dartmouth sat watching him in silence for a moment, then spoke his name.

But the secretary's mind was far away and did not answer him.

"A machine—nothing but a machine—well, it is what I want," he muttered, then called him again.

The youth looked up with a start.

"Sir, did you speak?"

"Yes," said Reginald Dartmouth. "Are you deaf? I sometimes think you are."

The secretary shook his head.

"No," he said, "not at all; I can hear perfectly."

"Hem!" said his master, thoughtfully. "Nor blind, eh, Stanfield, nor blind?"

"Nor blind, sir," repeated the youth, monotonously, with a queer glance that the spectacles did not reveal.

"No, not blind; I think sometimes you see more than most men," resumed Reginald Dartmouth, with a piercing glance. "You are quicker than you look, Stanfield. You had been to the Warren when I saw you passing on the terrace, eh?"

"Yes, sir," replied the secretary.

"Pray do you often go to the Warren?" asked Reginald Dartmouth, with an indifferent air.

"No, sir, but seldom; I called to ask after Sir Charles Anderson," replied the secretary.

"And you saw Mrs. Lucas?"

The youth nodded and turned to the table again.

Reginald Dartmouth bent his eyes upon the ground; there was a pause; suddenly he looked up.

"Stanfield, put those letters aside, I wish to speak to you," he said, and rising lent against the mantel-piece, with his dark, piercing eyes fixed upon the blue spectacles and expressionless face. "I am inclined to trust you with a delicate piece of business. I say I am inclined to trust you, for you know too well, I think, the consequences that would result from any faithlessness on your part for me to fear."

The youth inclined his head with deep humility.

"Good," said the captain, in answer to his gesture. "Now, Stanfield, I stopped you on the terrace for a purpose."

"I thought so," murmured the youth inwardly.

"Did you notice the lady who was seated beside me?"

The secretary nodded.

"Do you know who and what she is?"

He nodded again.

"I have heard the servants call her the Countess Lucille, and seen her letters addressed Countess Vitzarelli."

"Good," responded the captain, with curt approval of the concise summing up. "Tell me, did you remark anything particular, curious, worthy of notice, in her manner, bearing, face—you understand me?"

The secretary nodded and knit his brows.

"Madame is beautiful," he said.

"Well?"

"And thoughtful."

"Ay," said Reginald Dartmouth, "thoughtful."

"She has something on her mind; her eyes are fixed on some object far away and her heart is set on some mission that fills her whole existence."

Reginald Dartmouth took two or three strides to and fro.

"Stanfield," he said, "I was right; you are not blind. The Countess has something on her mind, has some hidden purpose, some secret mission—"

"That you would have me find out," interrupted the youth, in the same monotonous tones but with another unseen glance of fire and scrutiny.

"You have it," said Reginald Dartmouth, with cold sternness. "That I would have you find out. Are you equal to the task?"

"I am equal to the endeavour," replied the youth, without a change of voice or look. "I am equal to all my master bids me take in hand."

"Good," said Reginald Dartmouth. "Now, that you may not start upon a wrong tack, I give you this hint; the secret lies apart from Italy."

"I know it," said the secretary. "Madame wears another look when the Count and she hold conference."

"True—you are not blind—very far from it," said Reginald Dartmouth, approvingly. "Have you any clue? You have seen so far, that perhaps you have pierced farther than I have."

The youth shook his head.

"No," he said. "It has not been my business. It is now, and I will do my best."

"Do," said his master. "And now for the means. I have spoken to the Countess of you—striven to interest her in you. I have succeeded so far that she has consented to avail herself of your help in such matters as belong to the Italian affairs. You will follow her commands as well as you have done mine, and meanwhile use every opportunity—and make them where they do not occur—to discover this mystery."

The secretary nodded.

"You may want money," resumed Reginald Dartmouth, after a moment's thought. "Here are bank notes to the amount of some hundreds; use them if necessary and more shall be forthcoming." He spoke hurriedly and feverishly now, strive though he did to remain calm and cold. "For the rest—"

The secretary interrupted him monotonously as before,—

"Money is of little use if I get no other help. I must have means of watching her, of following her unseen, of listening to her thoughts when she murmurs them to her glass, of seeing her face when she thinks it unseen, of tracing out the hidden secret in every sigh and every word spoken in sleep."

Reginald Dartmouth stared with a sudden pallor, and almost shuddered before the subtle meaning of the lifelessly, monotonously spoken words.

"Enough, enough," he said. "You shall have every opportunity to—to do all this. Let me think. Ah! You know her apartments?"

"The left corridor; who sleeps above?"

"No one," replied Reginald Dartmouth. "The rooms overhead are untouched, left in their old state and used for lumber rooms."

"Ah, they will do," said the secretary, with a sudden change of countenance—a sudden and transient gleam of satisfaction.

"They will suit my purpose—a hole in the ceiling, a chink in the boarding—some place for the ear and the eye—ay, ay—where are the keys?"

"Here," said Reginald Dartmouth, going to a drawer and taking a bunch of rusty keys from a number of others.

The secretary turned them over, and after a glance at each, dropped them into his pocket, then with the old monotonous tone he said,—

"Rest easy, sir; the Countess's secret shall be yours, if mortal can unearth it."

Reginald Dartmouth said nothing, but the gleam in his eyes and the quivering of his thin, cruel lips were more eloquent than speech, and

after a few minutes' abstraction, during which he watched the vacant face of his supposed tool as it bent again over the pile of letters, he left the room.

Then the tool glided to the door, locked it, and pulling out the rusty keys stood regarding them with flashing eyes.

"The keys to the old rooms! Lumber! Ah, what may I not find among the lumber to foil you, Reginald Dartmouth!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

We must now go from the Hall to the Warren, where on a sofa, large and comfortable, in a sitting-room, not large but very cozy, lay Sir Charles.

He was pale and somewhat thin, more haggard looking than ever, and with dark marks, half of his old dissipation, half of his late illness, beneath his still frank and genial eyes.

One arm rested in a sling, for though the days had passed rapidly, and it was already three weeks since the race, the limb was still helpless and useless.

There was a slightly puzzled look on the invalid's face as he sat watching the sunlight that stole through the half-closed blinds.

Sir Charles, the dissolute, dissipated man of the world, who had run through three fortunes, ruined his digestion and almost spoiled as handsome a face as ever fell to the lot of man, was thinking, weighing rather, his past life, and contrasting its fiery, tumultuous ways with the quiet, peaceful, though painful ones of the last few weeks, and sorrowing quietly and silently over the misused time and mispent talents.

At least if he were not thinking so, he should have been, for his fine eyes looked remorseful, and it was with a deep, heart-born sigh he caught at the bell-rope and rang. Mrs. Lucas—rather older than when she ruled over the Dale, rather sadder in her deep mourning, but as active and hale as ever—entered with noiseless haste.

"Did you ring, sir?"

"Yes, Mrs. Lucas," said Sir Charles, twisting round with his frank smile.

"I hope you are not in any pain, sir," said Mrs. Lucas, anxiously. "Mr. Toddy said as we were to send for him the moment the arm got worse—"

"It isn't the arm this time, for a wonder, Mrs. Lucas," replied Sir Charles. "It's somewhere else. I have a pain in the heart, in the head, a longing that's a good deal worse than pain, to see your mistress!"

"Miss Rebecca?"

"Yes," he nodded. "I have been here for three weeks, and although you have been like a second mother to me, my dear old lady, I am naturally anxious to see and thank the cousin beneath whose roof I have experienced such unusual and extraordinary kindness. Mrs. Lucas, you must go to her and tell her that she must come here or that I really will—will, mind you—go to her and thank her. I cannot lay here any longer without unburdening my heart of some part of the load of gratitude lying on it. Go, Mrs. Lucas, I beseech you, and ask my cousin to come to me if only for a moment!"

Under the light banter of his tone there was a current of earnestness that made Mrs. Lucas hesitate.

"You know, sir, I have told you so many times, that Miss Rebecca does not see any one; nay, that she particularly wished me to tell you that she would not see you till you were able to come down."

"Why? But why?" asked Sir Charles, impatiently. "What on earth can be her reason? We are the best of friends—at least we were. I know of nothing to prevent her. Oh, my dear woman, go and give her a message, that if she will not come to me I shall go to her—ay, and at once."

Mrs. Lucas, alarmed by a movement he made of getting up from the couch, from which he had been bidden not to rise, muttered a hasty consent and left the room.

He waited impatiently for a few minutes, then

actually rose from the couch, but as he did so the door opened and Rebecca entered.

She looked very loveable—which is something near akin to lovely—in her quiet, dark dress, and her usually pale face was tinted by a slight crimson as she came forward in her quiet, unobtrusive way and held out her hand.

"Rebecca," said Sir Charles, taking her hand and keeping it, with an accompanying look of gratitude and affection, "Rebecca, how glad I am to see you. Why have you kept away from me?"

At this question Rebecca lowered her eyes with a sudden darkening of the brows, but raised them again as she replied,—

"Never mind that, Charlie, for a while. But tell me how you are this morning."

"Better," he said. "I should have been quite well I've no doubt if you hadn't kept me on the fidget longing to see you. How well and fresh you are looking—a nice contrast to the haggard old wreck I can see in the glass opposite," and he nodded with a smile that was rather sad, at the reflection of his own worn and haggard face.

Rebecca shook her head.

"Ah, Charlie," she said, gravely, "you promised me."

"Ay, and myself too, Rebecca. But, there, you know me—good to-day and bad to-morrow. 'Pon my word, my dear girl, I don't think I'm a responsible being, I don't really. You see, I can't say 'no.' Ah, dear me, I can't say 'no.' Life's all a temptation, Rebecca. But, there, what's the use of my telling you? How should you understand, you who have never seen it! But to go back. You must tell me why you have kept away from me. Have I offended you?"

Rebecca's pale face flushed, and she averted her eyes.

"No," she said. "You have never offended me, Charlie. Do not ask me more, I beg of you."

"But I must, my dear girl, I must. You do not know how it has worried me. It was of no use that fussy old fellow telling me to keep quiet or he would not answer for the consequences—though as to that nobody wanted him to that I know. It was no use his telling me to be composed and go to sleep. I couldn't be composed and I couldn't go to sleep. I said—or rather I thought: Here am I staying with Reg Dartmouth, I ride a race in his paddock, and that animal of mine pitches me head foremost at the finish. Well, so far so good. But here comes the twist. Instead of being taken to the new Hall I am carried off to Cousin Rebecca's the Warren. Well, that's accounted for by the presence of her carriage on the course, or by the fact of the Warren being nearer the Hall. But then comes the question. Here I lay for three weeks with fever off and on, but during the best part of the time well able to see any one. Cousin Rebecca doesn't show her head, only the doctor and Mrs. Lucas, who, by the way, is as good and kind-hearted an old soul as there is out of Heaven. Cousin Rebecca never comes near until I threaten to get up and find her for myself. And now she is here she won't tell me the *raison d'être* of her well-kept determination to absent herself. I am beginning to think there's a deeper reason than I dreamt of."

"There is good reason," replied Rebecca, with a flash of her upraised eye. "See, Charlie, I am a different woman from what I was when you saw me last. I was free and light-hearted then, but now—well, I have a purpose to live for, a purpose that creeps into every action of my daily life, and renders me unfit for the society of all—most of all an invalid requiring quiet and freedom from excitement."

Sir Charles Anderson raised himself upon his elbow and gazed long and fixedly at his cousin's face. He had never before seen it so moved.

"Rebecca," he said, in his frank way, "let there be no secrets between us. We are cousins, and you have done me many a good turn—for which I thank you from the bottom of my worthless heart, more especially for the last best turn of all. What is in the wind? You had some

reason for bringing me here to the Warren. Come, Rebecca, what was it?"

Rebecca got up, walked to the door and closed it carefully, then sinking into the chair and fixing her dark eyes upon the frank ones of Sir Charles said,—

"Because I could not trust you to the tender mercies of the master of the Hall."

Sir Charles stared with amazement.

"Not trust me!" he exclaimed with astonishment; then, as if struck by the deep meaning in her eyes lowered his own for an instant, then lifted them again and said, quietly: "Rebecca, you never were a romantic girl. Tell me what you mean."

"I will," said Rebecca, "I feel that I must, Charlie. I told you that I had a purpose. I have indeed, a deep and resolute one. Can you guess it?"

He shook his head.

"It is to revenge the death of my friend and second father, old Squire Darrell—and to restore to the rightful heir the Dale estate which Reginald Dartmouth by villainy and something worse holds and usurps."

Sir Charles turned pale and sank back against the curtains, covering his eyes with his hands.

Rebecca, with her small hands clasped tightly in her lap, continued, in a quieter tone:

"Can you guess why I would not see you before, Charlie? Could I have seen you and kept this purpose of mine from you? No, I should have surely let it out before you were strong enough to bear it—thrown you back into another fever and thwarted my own plans."

Sir Charles drew a long breath and raised himself upon his elbow.

"Rebecca," he said, in a low voice, "I need not say you have astonished me. I can scarcely persuade myself that I am not still dreaming and delirious. Reginald Dartmouth a murderer—Oh! I can't say the word. Surely there must be some mistake—surely—my dear girl—"

"Listen," interrupted Rebecca, with a sudden excitement, "Listen, and I will tell you the story of the events that have so changed me—changed me from a timid, weak woman into a determined resolute one. I will tell you without addition or exaggeration the history of Reginald Dartmouth's connection with the Dale, hiding and concealing nothing, and you shall judge for yourself if there are grounds for my suspicions."

Then while Sir Charles leaned forward with fixed and earnestly attentive gaze she narrated clearly and calmly the story of the Squire's quarrel, the flight of Hugh, next the advent of Grace, the visit of Reginald Dartmouth, and the disappearance of Grace.

But when she came to the illness of the Squire her voice grew broken and troubled, and at last got excited and rapid, until with the last words she covered her face with her hands and shuddered with horror.

"He was ill—dying they told me. I ordered the carriage, William drove me to the front gate. As we came up within fifty yards of it I heard—I was watching the light in the sick-room window—a cry and a shriek repeated twice or thrice. It was the Squire's voice I can swear—the Squire's voice raised in entreaty, horror and rage. I trembled like a leaf and thought of stopping William to ask him if he had heard it, but remembering that he was nearly deaf I let him go on to the gates. He got down there and asked me if he should drive up to the Hall door. Now I had intended to stop him at the gates and go up the shrubbery way to avoid the noise of the carriage on the front drive, but the dreadful shrieks had driven it from my head. However, I told him to wait there, and, pursuing my original intention, got out and walked hurriedly through the shrubbery. It was quite dark and I had on my light boots. No one could see or hear me. When I had reached the end of the shrubbery and was about to turn into the terrace something moved at my right—a dog or cat I thought at first—but keeping close to the shrubs I peered anxiously and saw Reginald Dartmouth. He was leaning against the terrace with something white in his hand. It was not a handkerchief—that I could swear to—but it was like—only like—mind you I could not see distinctly

—a folded sheet of paper. Well, I waited, waited until I heard him mutter something and walk slowly down the steps of the terrace towards the old well. Still I waited until he came up again, and then saw by the reflection of a light carried past one of the windows at the moment that the paper or whatever it was was gone. Hush! I have not finished. I turned back terrified and trembling, but, telling nothing of all that I had seen to William, made my way to the Hall door and found the Squire was dead."

"Dead! How did he die?"

"Screaming, shrieking and struggling. So Reginald Dartmouth says, who according to his own account, had fallen asleep on the chair beside the bed and was awakened by the last terrible struggles of a weak and aged man. Oh, Charlie, when I think of it all—and when do I not!—my heart seems on fire! Could it be possible for the old man at the last gasp to shriek as I heard him shriek? Could it be possible! He was weak, very weak. If he had been at his last breath he could not have cried so loudly, so vigorously, so fiercely. No! Dying he might have been, but depend upon it that the man whose interest his death advanced cut short his last hours by foul play."

Sir Charles Anderson started from the couch but to sink on it again with white face and quivering lips.

"Oh, it is too horrible—too horrible!" he shrieked. "And yet—the will!"

"Ay, the will!" broke in Rebecca. "I tell you all this has changed me utterly. It has taken possession of my soul, absorbed my whole life, and made me what you see me! The will—that is the most important point. The Squire disinherits his only and well-beloved son; disinherits the girl, my poor darling Grace, whom he had declared his heiress, and leaves all—all to this fair-faced, false-hearted man, who plotted as you admit to snare the poor girl for the gold, and falling in that stained his hands with a darker crime."

There was silence for some minutes, Rebecca, staring before her with white face and fixed eyes.

"What is to be done?" asked Sir Charles, presently.

Rebecca shook her head, then rose, and, walking to the window, pointed to the new Hall rearing its proud head from among the trees, and said,—

"I know not. I am working quietly, slowly. To no one have I divulged the secret of that night, but I am working silently. Night and day that hideous palace gives me no rest—it is hideous to me, for it is built of the old Squire's blood—and night and day it reminds me that two innocent beings whom I loved are wandering helpless, homeless about the earth, and the villain who wronged them both is basking in fine linen and gold, flinging his ill-gotten wealth broadcast and mocking Heaven's justice with a brazen defiance."

"The first thing must be their recovery," said Sir Charles, thoughtfully. "Has anything been done? Have they been advertised for?"

Rebecca shook her head.

"Mr. Reeves, the lawyer, told me that Reginald Dartmouth had promised to advertise for them, but, though I dared not say so, I could not believe that he would keep his word."

"And did not you?"

"No," said Rebecca. "At one time I should have done so as the first step, but these terrible events have sharpened my wits. I knew that the advertisement would come to Reginald Dartmouth's knowledge and render him suspicious of me. And that of all things must be avoided if punishment is to be dealt him."

"Ay, I see," mused Sir Charles, sinking on to the couch again; then he continued,—

"You say the old well; there is none now—at least that I have seen."

Rebecca smiled significantly.

"That is the repository of some secret, trust me. Think you, Charlie, that he would leave it in existence? No, it was filled up the day after the Squire's funeral."

"Ay!—oh, Rebecca, it grows more evident with each moment. What is to be done? Shall

I go and grasp him by the throat and extract the vile secret from him?"

And he clenched his hands.

Rebecca shook her head sadly.

"No, that would lose us all at once. Craft must be met by craft, cunning by cunning. You were his friend, Charlie; you must go back to the Hall and play the part of one still."

"What!" exclaimed Sir Charles, looking troubled. "I—I—do you think I could? Rebecca? You know what I am. The chances are that I should forget my part and get up at breakfast or dinner, in the smoking-room, or on the lawn, and, unable to bear it any longer, clutch him by the throat and out with the whole of it."

"No, no," said Rebecca, laying her hand on his, which was pulling impatiently at his collar.

"You will go back, Charlie, and play your part for my sake."

She flushed a little—only for a moment—but the words had the wanted effect.

"Your sake, Rebecca? Well said. You were always good to me—always. I'll do this, and more, for you."

Rebecca's eyes shone with tears.

"Oh, Charlie," she cried, "years ago I did poor Hugh Darrell, unintentionally, a grievous wrong; if, oh, if by any chance I could give him back his rights!"

(To be continued.)

By the Bertillon system of identifying criminals employed in France the length and width of the head are taken, also the length and width of the left, middle, and little fingers, the length of the left foot, of the left forearm, of the right ear, the height of the figure, the measurement of the outstretched arms and of the trunk when seated. It is said that no instance of all these measurements coinciding in two persons has ever been known.

THE manufacture of leather is reaching what must be almost the highest perfection of the art. A new process has recently been patented in France for the production of a leather which, both to the touch and eye, has a striking resemblance to velvet. Leathers of this description hitherto manufactured have been obtained by treatment of the flesh side of the hide or skin. The flesh side of the skin being always coarse, the patentees claim now to secure better results by treating the hair side. They scratch or rub the hair side with a rubber of strong abrasive qualities, or with emery or glass when working small surfaces, and use a grindstone for heavier work. In this manner a downy nap is brought out which they throw and lay in different directions, thereby bringing out varied designs of changing hue and appearance. The velvety surface produced is said to be similar to the down of a peach. The fibre is very fine, soft to the touch, and has all the appearance of silk velvet shorn very close.

ONE of the most wonderful time-keepers known to the horologist was made in London about one hundred years ago and sent by the president of the East India Company as a gift to the Emperor of China. The case was made in the form of a chariot, in which was seated the figure of a woman. This figure was made of pure ivory and gold, and sat with her right hand resting upon a tiny clock fastened to the side of the vehicle. A part of the wheels which kept track of the flight of time were hidden in the body of a tiny bird, which had seemingly just alighted upon the lady's finger. Above was a canopy so arranged as to conceal a silver bell. This bell was fitted with a miniature hammer of the same metal, and, although it appeared to have no connection with the clock, regularly struck the hours, and could be made to repeat by touching a diamond button on the lady's bodice. In the chariot, at the ivory lady's feet, there was a golden figure of a dog, and above and in front were two birds, apparently flying before the chariot. This beautiful ornament was made almost entirely of gold, and was elaborately decorated with precious stones.

FACETIE.

"WHAT caused your bookkeeper's downfall?"
"Lost his balance."

A MAN commenting upon the ruins of Pompeii, said it was a very imposing city, but very much out of repair.

"MISS FLIRTY has very engaging ways."
"Look here, old man, are you engaged to her, too?"

"PA, what is an optimist?" "A man, Bobby, who tells you it is a fine day when it is snowing like the mischief."

MOTHER: "Why don't you try to do right instead of doing wrong?" Johnnie: "'Cause I can do wrong without trying."

"I WONDER how it was first discovered that fish was a brain food?" She: "Probably by the wonderful stories that men tell who go fishing."

We are told "the evening wore on," but we are never told what the evening wore on that occasion. Was it the close of a winter day?

"DO I make a fool of myself very often, Miss Lovely?" he asked. "Oh, no," replied she, sweetly, "not often—only it seems to last!"

MAID-SERVANT: "Professor, oh, professor! just think, I have swallowed a pin!" Absent-Minded Professor: "Never mind; here is another one."

BLUSTER: "Do you mean to say that I am an idiot?" Calme: "I hope that I could not say such an ungentelemanly thing. But I see you catch my idea."

"WHAT I want," said the anarchist, "is reform." "And that," replied the police justice, "is what you're going to get, if there is any moral efficacy in jail discipline."

HOAX: "I hear that MacHamlet has just received a legacy of £40,000!" "Yes, and that makes him at once the richest and the poorest actor in the profession."

SINGLEMAN: "Do you let your wife have the last word?" Benedict: "Do I let her? H'm! it's easy to tell that you know nothing of married life."

BUFF: "Roberts fell off a fifty-foot ladder and wasn't hurt a bit." Baff: "Fifty-foot ladder? I don't believe it at all." Biff: "It's quite true. He fell off the bottom rung."

VISITOR (at dinner): "Aren't you going to eat any meat, Tommy?" Tommy: "No'm. I guess not. Mamma said I wasn't to have any if you took it twice."

"JIMMIE, where did you get that sixpence?" "It's the money you gave me for the heathen, mamma." "Then why did you keep it?" "My teacher said I was a heathen."

SHE: "Should you die, are you opposed to my re-marrying?" He: "No." She: "Why not?" He: "Why should I be solicitous about the welfare of a fellow I'll never know?"

AT THE CLUB.—Wardle: "He seems to be a confirmed cynic. I didn't hear him say a good word about anybody." Winkle: "Perhaps you didn't draw him out about himself."

IN A BRIGHTON TRAIN.—"Yes, I've given up betting; I've paid for my experience, and have done with it. I shall never bet again." "I'll bet you ten to one you will." "I'll take you in sovereigns."

MR. BRICKROW (at the opera): "Goodness me! You have stuffed your ears with cotton." Mrs. Brickrow: "Hush! That's so I won't get interested in the music. I don't want people to think I am not used to good society."

"THAT snowstorm you have painted is wonderfully realistic." "It must be. A tramp got into my studio, one day, caught sight of the picture, and unconsciously put on my fur overcoat before he went out."

SMALL girl, disputing with her brother, as to the equality of the fair sex to his own. "You, superior to me? Why, I could marry and become a Countess, or a Duchess, or a Baroness's Lady, but you can only be plain Jacky Brown all your life long. Pooh!"

ART CRITIC: "What do you think of Alma Cadmium's painting?" Artist: "Oh, I think it is superb." Art critic: "I'm surprised to hear you say that. He says just the reverse of yours." Artist: "Ah, well; perhaps we're both mistaken."

EULALIA (sentimentally): "Oh, no; I have no desire for great wealth. I should be very happy as the wife of a noble breadwinner." George (practically): "And I should be happy, very happy, as the husband of a good bread-maker." She made up her mind to learn.

"THERE'S one curious thing about discovering places," said Johnny, after he got through with his study. "Take Bermuda, for instance. It was discovered by a man named Bermudez. How he happened to stumble on a place with a name just like his beats me."

"WHOM do you consider the greatest inventor of the times?" asked one woman. "My husband," she replied, proudly. "Why, I didn't know he ever invented anything." "You should hear the excuses he gives for coming home at two o'clock in the morning."

HARRINGAY: "My chimney fell in this morning at five o'clock." Hoxton: "How very unfortunate! Did it do much damage?" Harringay: "Oh, I suppose it will cost me ten pounds; but I don't mind that." Hoxton: "Don't mind it! Why not?" Harringay (joyfully): "Why, old fellow, it woke up our cook."

HUSBAND (indignantly reading a bill): "It's simply atrocious. Here's three pounds for seconds—three pounds gone in mere criminal waste, evaporated in the air!" Wife (coolly arranging her bonnet before the glass): "Yes, dear, gone to disinfect the odour of that last ten pounds' worth of cigars of yours."

MRS. WINKS: "I'd just like to know why those Minkes have so much more money than we have." Mr. Winks: "Mrs. Minks was born on Christmas-day, and married on Christmas-day, so that the three celebrations come at once. Think of the pile Mr. Minks has saved on presents to her."

MISS WYLLING: "Mr. Slimpton proposed to me last night, and I accepted him." Miss Golding: "Oh, it was you, was it?" Miss Wylling: "Of course. How funny you are! Why did you ask that?" Miss Golding: "He told me that if I refused him he'd propose to some girl that he knew would accept him."

"WHAT'S the matter, Footlite?" said an actor. "I thought you had a splendid engagement." "So did I. But I had to give it up." "Why?" "You see they cast me for the villain in a melodrama." "I should think you would make a good villain." "No, it's not in my line at all. I abominate cigarettes."

MR. MULHOOPLY: "Phwat fur are yez makin' such a noise on that pianny! Y'r drivin' me distracted wid y'r racket, an' me head achin' loik it wud split in two paces." Daughter: "Them new neighbours nix door has been complainin' of my playin'." Mr. Mulhooly: "Begorra, hammer harder."

POET: "If I ever catch the compositor who ruined my last poem I'll be tempted to murder him. You see I wrote a beautiful little gem about my prospective wife, and in it I referred to her as 'a composite of angels.'" Friend: "Well?" Poet: "And the thick-headed printer got it 'a composite of angles.'"

"I KNOW I play a poor game of billiards now," said the man with the cue in his hand, "but—" "You used to play a very good game," interrupted a sarcastic bystander. "But," continued the man with the cue, without noticing the interruption, "but, as I was saying, I used to play a far worse game."

"Is the editor-in-chief in?" asked the man with long hair, as he sauntered into the reporters' room at eight o'clock in the morning. "No, sir," said the office boy, "he does not come down so early. Is there anything I can do for you?" "Perhaps so. Are you connected with the poetical department of the paper?" "I am, sir." "Oh, what do you do?" "I empty the waste-paper baskets."

"SIR, I understand that you have secretly been making love to my daughter, and I must forbid an acquaintance begun in that way. You should have seen me first," said Mrs. Handsome. "Madam," said the shrewd suitor, "had I seen you first I should have forgotten your daughter and fallen in love with you." "Um—the informality of the proceeding was all I objected to. Come with me, and I will introduce you," was Mrs. Handsome's reply.

A YORKSHIRE farmer, having seen an advertisement for a youth for a solicitor's office, called upon the advertiser, and said: "My son has been in a lawyer's office sin' Whitsun, but he wants mair wage. What'll yo gie him?" "That depends upon what he can do," replied the solicitor. "For instance can he draw up a mortgage deed or a conveyance?" "Well," said the farmer, "I know nowt about mortgage deeds, but, as to drawing a conveyance, we keeps th' owd mare for that job."

SOME time ago, in Devonshire, there were a pair courting, named John and Mary. They had been courting for several years, when Mary began to think John was rather backward in popping the question, so she, being anxious to get married, thought she would try a scheme of her own. While out walking one day she said (blushingly), "John, what do you think all the people in the village are saying?" "I don't know," said John. "Well, they all say that we are going to get married." "Ah, ah," said John; "now we'll show 'em they're mistaken, and we won't get married."

SAID the wise man, "A soft answer turneth away wrath." A lady who believed in this precept said to her four-year-old Nellie, who is somewhat quick-tempered, "If one of your playmates speak rudely to you, return a soft answer." "Soft?" "Yes. Now run along and play; mamma is busy." The child went out on the lawn, where a neighbour's boy was mending a kite. She accidentally broke the kite still more, whereby the boy was made angry. "I don't like you; you're a horrid thing!" he said. Little Nellie's eyes flashed, and she was about to reply with a very unkind remark, when suddenly recalling her mother's advice about a soft answer, she looked the boy right in the eye, and said, meekly and slowly, "Mush."

FOND MOTHER (accompanied by small son): "I see you take children at this hotel." Hotel Proprietor (glancing genially at the lady's small son): "Oh, yes, madam, of course. How do you do, my little man?" Small Cherub: "None of your business." Fond Mother: "Oh, baby, you should not speak so to the gentleman." Cherub: "I will." Fond Mother: "Bless his little heart, don't ee know ee shouldn't speak so to mamma? Say 'I'm very well,' to the nice gentleman." Cherub: "I won't." Fond Mother: "You are a naughty boy! Don't kick the nice gentleman. Children are so innocent and playful that—" Proprietor: "I beg your pardon, madam; I said we took children, and we do; but it is my duty to warn you that we have measles and whooping-cough, and chicken-pox, and scarlet-fever, and small-pox in the hotel, and five children have something that looks like Asiatic cholera—Thank goodness, she's gone."

THE Japanese are a very polite people, but they sometimes like to play a joke, in a roundabout, Oriental way, upon the men of the West. In the days of the second empire, Baron Gros was sent to Japan to demand the opening of certain ports to French commerce. Among the rest he named to the Japanese ministers a certain city. The Japanese functionaries smiled so broadly when he preferred the request that the French ambassador asked them to tell him what gave them so much amusement; but instead of answering, the Japanese ministers said, "We will open the port in question, my lord, if France, in her turn, will open a certain port to us." "What port is that?" asked the Frenchman. "The port of Liverpool." "But, your excellencies," laughing, "Liverpool is not a French port, but an English one." "Yes!" answered the Japanese. "And the port you named is not in Japan, but in Corea." The French ambassador was compelled to admit the joke was against him.

SOCIETY.

THE Duke of Coburg can speak seven modern languages.

THE Duke of York will be very much in evidence this year, and, in fact the mainstay of the London season.

THE Prince intends to give a series of large dinner parties at Marlborough House during the next month.

THE Duke and Duchess of Connaught are to go to Germany in April for a short time, and they will be at Coburg for the marriage of the Grand Duke of Hesse and Princess Victoria Melita.

THE Queen will have among her guests at Villa Fabricotti, Florence, the Princess Louise and the Marquis of Lorne, who are going to Italy in advance of Her Majesty.

THE Queen is almost daily occupied with one or another detail of the coming Hesse-Coburg wedding, as the Duchess of Coburg fully appreciates her Majesty's love of such interesting events, and takes care to submit all sorts of questions for the Queen's approval.

It is hoped that the Empress Frederick will stay in England until close upon the time of the Queen's departure, but this will depend greatly upon the health of the Empress's third daughter, the Crown Princess of Greece, which has been very indifferent since the birth of her second little son.

THE Emperor and Empress of Russia have invited the Prince and Princess of Wales and the Princesses Victoria and Maud to go to St. Petersburg for the wedding of the Grand Duchess Xenie and the Grand Duke Alexander Michailovitch, which ceremony will probably take place about Whitsuntide.

THE Queen and the Prince of Wales have we are informed, both arranged to attend the wedding of the Grand Duke of Hesse and the Princess Victoria Melita, and both Her Majesty and the Prince are expected to stay at Coburg with Duke Alfred for a week.

PRINCE HENRY OF BATTENBERG has a scheme for making a tunnel under the river Medina, to connect the towns of East and West Coves. A company has been formed, and capital subscribed for the undertaking.

AN engagement between the Princess Josephine of Belgium and her first-cousin, Prince Charles Anthony Frederick William of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, has been arranged. Prince Charles is the nephew of the Countess of Flanders (his future bride's mother) and her brother, the King of Roumania. His elder brother is now heir to the Roumanian crown, while his future brother-in-law, Prince Albert of Belgium, if he lives, will inherit the Belgian. Prince Charles was five-and-twenty in September, is rather below the middle height, and of distinctly Teutonic appearance. He holds a lieutenant's commission in the 1st Regiment of Prussian Uhlans. His betrothed, who is four years his junior, is a handsome blonde of very prepossessing manners, an accomplished musician, and a frequent exhibitor at the Brussels art salons.

THE Queen has begged the Princess of Wales to postpone her departure for the Mediterranean until after the two Drawing Rooms, which are to be held at Buckingham Palace on Tuesday, the 27th instant, and Tuesday, March 6th. The presence of the Princess at these functions, invitations to which are to be limited to two hundred, will be the best possible proof of the falsity of the reports, which have been so recklessly circulated about her resolution to "retire from society," and so forth. The first Drawing Room will be an unusually brilliant function, as it is expected that both the Duchess of York and the Duchess of Fife will be present, and most of the members of the Royal Family who are then in England. The Queen will receive the Corps Diplomatique and the ministers on this occasion, and the general presentations will be taken for her Majesty by the Princess of Wales, who has not appeared at a Drawing Room since May 1891.

STATISTICS.

A PIANO contains a mile of wire.

PHILADELPHIA has 25,000 more women than men.

THROUGHOUT the entire world there are annually about 180,000 suicides.

A RUBY of the best quality, and of more than three carats, is worth more than a diamond of the same size and weight.

FIVE crematories are to be erected in Chicago, for the cremation of its garbage. Each will have a capacity of burning 100 tons daily.

It is estimated that the national sport of bull-fighting in Madrid costs every man, woman, and child in the capital of Spain at least ten shillings each per annum.

GEMS.

THE early and the latter part of human life are the best, or, at least, the most worthy of respect; the one is the age of innocence, the other of reason.

To those who are employed and busy time flies with great rapidity. Life is tedious only to the idle. Nothing is more monotonous than the ticking of the clock to him who has nothing to do but to listen to it.

No man can live a Christian life that does not avail himself of all the powers given him on every side. There is work for the thought, work for every moral sentiment, work for affection, work for all the combinations of the faculties.

It isn't what you see but what you feel that will make your work interesting. You can look at a thing and see it, but that's nothing. You can look at something which may give you an emotion. That's feeling. Facts don't amount to anything. Cyclopedias are full of them. It's an individual's expression of them that is interesting.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

OYSTER OMELETTE.—Stew half a dozen large oysters in their own liquor; remove from the fire as soon as they come to the boiling point. Drain them on a napkin, cut them in halves and spread them over a plain egg omelette before it is turned.

DEVILLED OYSTERS.—Open a sufficient number of oysters for the dish, leaving them in their deep shells and their liquid. Add a little lemon juice, pepper, salt, and cayenne. Put a small piece of butter on each, and place the shell carefully on a gridiron over a clear bright fire, and boil for a few minutes. Serve them on a napkin, with bread and butter.

ORANGES AND COCOANUT.—Divide the oranges into thirds; after skinning them put one teacup of water and a quarter pound of sugar into a pan; put in the thirds of three oranges when it boils, and boil five minutes; take them out and boil down the juice till quite thick; put some of the oranges in a glass dish, some of the juice, a little grated cocoonut, and repeat this till all are finished; put whipped cream on the top, or just leave the dish without.

PLUM CAKE.—Half pound of flour, six ounces butter, six ounces sugar, four eggs, half pound currants, quarter pound mixed peel, half teaspoon baking powder, a little flavouring, either mixed spice or essence of lemon. Beat the butter and sugar together till quite white with the back of a spoon, then beat up the eggs very light and add them, then mix in the flour and baking powder, and beat very well, then the currants and peel. The currants should be washed in cold water, and dried and picked, and then mixed with a spoonful of the half pound of flour; beat all well, put in the flavouring, and put into a greased and floured cake tin, and bake till ready.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THREE-TENTHS of the earnings of a Belgian convict are set aside for his benefit on release.

AMBER, often classed among gems, is a fossil product. Many of the specimens inclosing insects, are manufactured from gum coral.

THE officers of the Swedish Navy are considered military officers, and in full dress are obliged to wear spurs.

IN England, during the reign of Henry VIII., 300 beggars were beheaded in one year for soliciting alms.

To drink wine without diluting it with water was regarded by both Greeks and Romans as a barbarism.

At Court balls in Stockholm, there is a curious rule that all the lady guests must wear either black or white.

It is stated that the coloured people of the United States support seven colleges, seventeen academies, and fifty high schools, in which there are 80,000 pupils.

GERMANY is proud of its success in training dogs for army purposes. They are trained to recognize the uniforms of probable enemies, and are taught to give warning of their approach by pointing—never by barking.

IN the Vatican at Rome there is a marble statue with natural eyelashes, the only one with this peculiarity in the world. It represents Ariadne sleeping on the island of Naxos at the moment when she was deserted by Theseus.

A HUSBAND in Finland has no claim to anything earned by his wife, who may, moreover, by anti-nuptial agreement, retain all she has as well as all she may acquire, and may reserve to herself the privilege of managing her property and its income.

THE worst air is found in two strata; one near the ground and the other at a height of about 90 feet. This height represents the average altitude of the discharge of gas, smoke, and offensive fumes given off by the factories and other industrial appurtenances of a city.

At the English Bar any man may rise to the highest position in the State. Most of our Lord Chancellors have risen from humble positions in life, and their occupancy of the woolsack has laid the foundation of many a noble family. More than half the Lord Chancellors of England during the past fifty years were the sons of poor men. One of them was the son of a country barber, and the father of the great Lord Eldon was a Newcastle coalheaver.

A GREAT warm current, much like the Gulf Stream and of equal magnitude, called the Black Stream or Japan Current, runs northward along the eastern shore of Asia. Close to the east coast of Japan it flows through a marine valley which holds the deepest water in the world. It was sounded at a depth of five and a quarter miles by the United States steamer *Tuscarora* in 1875, while surveying for a projected cable route between the United States and Japan. The heavy sounding-weight took more than an hour to sink to the bottom. But trial was made of a chain yet more profound, where the lead did not reach to the bottom with the greatest length of line used. It is the only depth of ocean that yet remains unfathomed.

THE Hawaiian language is composed mainly of vowels, and a few consonants put in to vary the monotony. Every vowel is pronounced. For instance, the simple word "nanao," the glib native rolls out the five syllables with neatness and despatch. This means "enlighten." Double vowels are very frequent, but never a diphthong. Three vowels are not uncommon, and, as above, four and sometimes more are found unseparated by consonants. In the mouth of the uneducated native, the language is apt to be explosive, but the higher classes speak it with a fluent grace that surpasses the French or the Italian. In sound it somewhat resembles the general flow of the continental European languages, for the vowels all have the French quality, and the accents are not dissimilar.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. R.—It is impossible for us to judge.

AN INQUIRER.—A rupee is worth about 1s. 2d.

L. A.—If the mother is alive she takes one-third.

BOB.—The Shah of Persia visited England in 1873.

ANXIOUS INQUIRER.—The *Eurydice* was lost 24th March, 1878.

PRIVATE TOMMY ATKINS.—No commissions are bought or sold in the army.

FREDERICK.—The person who ordered the work is responsible.

J. A. N.—You should have returned the watch at once.

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—The average number, we believe, is twenty-five.

ANNIE.—Lemon juice and salt will remove ordinary iron rust.

WOLFE.—We have no reliable knowledge of either its address or object.

ONE IN DISTRESS.—The case is one as to which a lawyer should be consulted.

JUSTLY INDIGNANT.—You can proceed against him only by the help of a solicitor.

G. O. G.—From Cape Horn to Cape Town is close upon 6,000 miles.

A REGULAR READER.—It comes under the same law as other personal property.

AN INQUISITIVE READER.—So far as we know there are no means of ascertaining.

G. A. T.—If you are summoned as a witness you are entitled to expenses.

BERTRAM.—If would rest entirely with the society to specify the terms.

A WIDOWER.—If a wife dies without leaving a will, her money would belong to her husband.

G. E. W.—A man takes his nationality from his father no matter where he is born.

RONALD.—If a debt has not been acknowledged for six years it cannot be recovered.

ONE IN TROUBLE.—The only cure for a varicose vein is rest and a bandage on the limb.

JOHNNY GREEN.—Through any of the principal chemists in London. We do not give addresses.

A CONSTANT READER.—The paper you name has probably the largest evening circulation in London.

H. R. N.—We have no means of knowing the height of the highest chimney stacks in England.

MARTIN.—Any bookseller will tell you what books there are on the subject, and their prices.

L. H.—We cannot state the rules under which it is conducted; but it is not a convict prison.

EDWICK.—The best thing you can do is to take the garments to a professional cleaner.

O. W. K.—The brain of an ant is larger in proportion to its size, than that of any other known creature.

R. V. B.—It is impossible for us to say without seeing the document. You must show it to a solicitor.

AN OLD READER.—Black lead is not charcoal and iron, but graphite, a natural product, the same as is used in making pencils.

AN ADMIRING READER.—The title of Lord Mayor of York was conferred by a charter of Richard the Second in 1389.

EDGAR EDWARD.—The militia were embodied for permanent duty in 1854 (Crimean War) and 1857 (Indian Mutiny).

ONE WHO WANTS ADVICE.—As the matter is of such immense importance, you had better obtain counsel's opinion.

F. O. E.—The Woman's Property Act of 1882 is the principal one, but it has since been amended in some respects.

AN EMIGRANT.—The most direct route to New Zealand is by steamer to Halifax, train to Vancouver, and steamer thence to New Zealand.

C. A. H.—The address of the Civil and Mechanical Engineers' Society is 7, Little Queen-street, London, S.W.

DOUGLAS.—Sir Garnet (now Lord) Wolseley was in command at Tel-el-Kebir, and throughout the Egyptian and Nile Campaigns.

MARY MORRIS.—The servant is entitled to her wages, although she may be ill and under medical attendance provided by the mistress.

MUSICIAN.—We are unable to name the instruments in the order you desire, for what one could readily master, another would find it difficult to learn.

WARNER.—The Latin quotation from Ballus is to the effect that "the safety of a kingdom does not depend so much upon its armies, or its treasures, as upon its alliances."

ONE WHO WOULD LIKE TO KNOW.—Roofs of houses in the east are flat, because the inhabitants spend much of their time there sitting on rugs and carpets, enjoying the delightful atmosphere.

A PUZZLED ONE.—The expression "exquisite," as applied to the sensation of pain, is properly used; it means intense, or hardly endurable pain.

F. S.—We have never met with an effective or satisfactory method of renovating worn out or "seedy" leather chair coverings.

V. O.—In 1869 our law courts decided that a peer could be made a bankrupt. In 1871 it was decided that a bankrupt could not sit in the House of Lords.

A VERY OLD READER.—An ordinary creditor who has failed to prove his claim against a bankrupt before cannot do so after the bankrupt has obtained his discharge.

WALTER WALTERS.—The deepest coalpit in England is, we believe, at Aston Moss, near Manchester, the depth being 3,000 feet, or 1,933 yards; this is 227 yards deeper than the Rosebridge Pit, near Wigan.

A MISERABLE GIRL.—We presume that your general health is good, this being so we can only attribute what you complain of to decayed teeth. A visit to the dentist will set matters right. We are glad to know that you appreciate the "Reader" so much.

A. R. C. B.—If disputes arise, as they sometimes will in spite of all efforts to prevent them, let them be conducted without any display of temper on either side. Above all, if the children be present, settle your dissensions at another time.

MIRIAM.—It is said that we owe the invention of visiting cards to the Chinese, and that in England in the early part of the last century, old playing-cards were often utilised for visiting purposes by writing the owner's name thereon.

ANXIOUS BERT.—No particulars obtainable except by writing to the governor of the prison, or you must ask for them as a special personal favour, or you may not get them; give the full name of the individual you are personally interested in.

WHAT GOOD HAVE I DONE IN THE WORLD?

THIS pertinent question comes home to us all, When the banner of thought is unfurled, When regret and its shadowy phantoms annoy—"What good have I done in the world?"

Have I made one heart happy, that would have been sad?

Have I lightened one spirit of woe?

Have I given a cup of cold water, in faith, To some poor thirsting mortal below?

Have I bound up the wounds of the suffering and weak?

Have I ever a prisoner set free?

Have I done unto others as I would have them, In confidence, do unto me?

Have I sacrificed self, for the sake of a friend?

Have I gladly forgiven a foe?

Is the world any better because I have lived On the earth? that my spirit would know.

Have I sheltered some lamb from the pitiless storm When the tempest its thunderbolts hurled?

Have I, tell me, sweet angels, that guard me to-day, Have I done any good in the world?

M. A. K.

J. Y.—If your father left any property, the children who shared it (the mother being dead) are answerable for the rent of the house until full legal notice has expired, unless an arrangement can be made with the landlord.

ANTHONY.—In accordance with the etiquette of the times, if a lady with whom you are walking acknowledges the bow of a person with whom you are not acquainted it is expected of you to raise your hat in return in deference to the lady.

F. S.—Mix with either cold or warm water, then stir or beat it up for a few minutes. It dissolves very easily and is often used without further preparation, but is improved by boiling. It is not as strong as adhesive or gum arabic.

KATHLEEN MAYOUBSEEN.—The following recipe which is recommended to restore the colour of an acid stain on violet silk may prove of service to you: Brush the discoloured stain with tincture of iodine; then, after a few seconds, saturate the spot well with a solution of hyposulphite of soda and dry gradually.

RUFUS.—You can never get a book to teach you as a teacher can, for the simple reason that it is impossible to state things in books so that every reader can understand them; some people are quick-witted, some slow, and it is only the flexible mind of the teacher that can adjust itself to the varying comprehensions of different people.

DOBOVAN.—A man born in this country may now entirely abandon his allegiance to the British Crown by taking out naturalisation papers in the States; and similarly one born in the States can become a British subject by taking out papers here; the two countries came to an arrangement after some little friction on the subject about a dozen years ago.

S. P.—The sprat is a distinct fish from the herring, though somewhat like the latter in appearance; its full length, however, is only five inches, while herrings attain twice that measurement; then, the arrangement of fins is different in the two fishes, and while the sprat has a saw-like arrangement of scales on the bottom of its belly, the herring is smooth.

WOULD-BE SINGER.—1. We are afraid you cannot accomplish your desire without the aid of a teacher. There are many good manuals on singing to be had, but you would find it extremely difficult to make any progress alone. 2. Write to Abel Heywood and Son, Oldham-street, Manchester, for a list of their publications; we think you will there find something to suit your friends.

A ROVER.—The blue shark (*Carcharias Glauca*), about eight feet long, is the one most often caught off the British coast; more rarely, the basking shark (*selache maxima*) is taken; he is of immense size, but comparatively harmless; the most dreaded of all sharks is the white one (*Carcharias Vulgaris*), a ferocious brute of great size, seldom seen further north than the Mediterranean.

L. P. W.—If you mean an auction saleroom the tenant must have an auctioneer's license costing £10; if, however, the goods are Dutch auctioned—that is, the auctioneer does not raise the price by repeated bids from the people but starts it at a higher figure and comes down and down till he finds a purchaser—then all that is needed is a broker's license, obtainable from the clerk to the J.P.'s in your district.

AN ANXIOUS PARENT.—In regard to the "spiritual instruction" of your children, such as you say they receive at the Sunday-school which they attend, but with which your husband finds fault, we can only say that it is a matter which you should settle between yourselves, without any outside interference. So long as he does not absolutely forbid the children going to the Sunday-school in question, you are certainly at liberty to encourage their attendance at it.

CURIOSITY.—The custom appears to have originated with Edward III., who reserved its use for the members of the Royal family. The State robes of Her Majesty are sent throughout with miniver, which is produced by inserting in ermine black diamond-shaped spots cut from the paws of the Astrachan lamb. Miniver also encircles the Royal diadem, and the rank of nobility at State gatherings is determined by the arrangements of miniver worn on their robes.

SCOTTY.—The Caledonian Canal, Scotland, cost about one million sterling. In 1773 James Watt was employed to survey the site, a distance of about sixty miles, with the view of forming a ship canal between the two seas to save about four hundred miles of coasting voyage by the North of Scotland. In 1801 Telford was engaged by Government to report; the canal was subsequently made and opened in 1833. About 574 miles are natural lake navigation, and the remaining twenty-three miles are artificial or canal navigation.

WILFRID.—The grand demonstration was not made until 1804. In that year, Bonaparte had assembled 60,000 men and 10,000 horses, and a flotilla of 1,800 vessels and 17,000 sailors to invade England. The coasts of Kent and Sussex were covered with martial towers and lines of defence; and nearly half the adult population of Britain was formed into volunteer corps. It is supposed that the French armament served merely for a demonstration, and that Bonaparte never seriously intended the invasion.

DAME DURDEN.—Have only lukewarm water; have some melted yellow soap. Put as much melted soap in the water as makes it soapy, then get some liquid ammonia; put in one tablespoonful to enough warm water to wash a good big garment; now shake out the flannel, and wash it quickly; don't rub at all if possible, but dump it up and down—rubbing makes flannel shrink—wring out; have another water ready with a good deal less soap and less ammonia; wash the same way, wring, shake well, fold, clap, and hang to dry. While drying, shake and pull out several times.

LADY VALERIA.—It is hard to define what a true lady is in the general acceptance of the term. If she be a society lady she must so conform to the usages of the circle in which she moves as to give no mortal a chance to dispute her claim to the title. But, after all, if a woman be true to herself, she is more likely to win the title of lady than by exerting her best powers to make the world so acknowledge her. If she be truthful, sincere, frank, and candid, treating her associates with uniform courtesy and kindness, frowning upon scandal and discouraging gossip; if a wife, so bearing herself as to reflect honor upon her husband, and if a mother so managing her children as to make obedience on their part not only a duty, but a pleasure, she will enjoy the consciousness of having qualities of mind and heart that all women must possess to be true ladies.

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